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Kent on Sunday

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Pick 'n' Fix is just one way in which SES Business Water are demonstrating their commitment to helping local businesses get watertight for winter. Their recently launched Winter Hub is packed full of useful information, easily digestible tips and expert advice – as well as handy infographics which are free to download and share with your team – because making plans to get your business watertight is easiest when everyone is on-board!

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Entries close 13th January 2017. Pick'n'Fix service applies to one domestic sized boiler only, up to a maximum rating of 45kW. Excludes any boiler spares, additional parts or remedial work. Excludes taps with ceramic discs. These can be repaired at an additional charge – call us on 0208 722 7004 to enquire. Includes stop cocks up to 22mm. Any replacement parts will be chargeable in addition. Non-standard ball valves excluded. Please note that any dripping caused by a defective syphon would be excluded. Repairs can be carried out at additional charge.



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Real communities live only in the real world

At some point we may all have to stop and reflect how much life in this county has changed over the last 20 years and try not to mourn it was a sizeable chunk of our lives that witnessed it.

Because for all the technological advances we have made to make our lives seem slicker and more unified, we have seen our communities under go some incredible changes.

Our councils are now running on empty and there's an issue over whether fumes alone will be enough to simply survive. Our hospitals are seeing services shifted and often described as inadequate. Many of our schools are facing a financial quagmire the like of which they have never seen before.

And in addition to all of that, we have seen our town centres decimated by the double whammy of online shopping and out-of-town developments.

Banks and post



Editor **Chris Britcher**

offices are closing left, right and centre too; the traditional glue which once held retail hubs together now fast evaporating.

Yet we convince ourselves our sense of community is stronger than ever - primarily because the world of social media allows us to gather together under common umbrellas.

It is, however, an illusion. Because our sense of community should come from shared, real, experiences. Of social interactions in our neighbourhoods. Instead, we think comments on Facebook or Twitter are too often a sufficient contribution.

We cannot change the march of technology - so much of it so empowering - but we can reinstall a genuine sense of community. And with the challenges that lie ahead in Kent, as elsewhere, there is perhaps no time like the present to engage with those around us in working to create a better tomorrow.

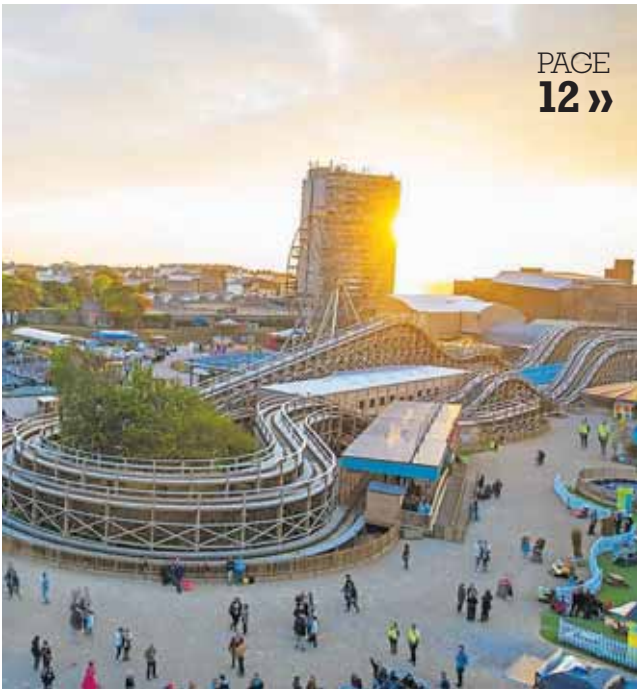
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HOW TO CONTACT US...

Editor: Chris Britcher
Email chris.britcher@archant.co.uk
Address: Kent House, 81 Station Road, Ashford TN23 1PP
Editorial: News: 01233 653475
Sport/Leisure: 01233 653479
Email editorial@kosmedia.co.uk
Advertising:
Jobs/Notices: 01233 653461
Business: 01233 653461
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Retail/Leisure/Motors: 01233 653461
Email sales@kosmedia.co.uk
Distribution: 01233 653470

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Our primary schools on road to improvement

By Emily King

emily.king@archant.co.uk

EDUCATION chiefs in the county say they are pleased with the latest school league tables ranking the performance of tougher new SATs tests in our primaries, despite both Kent and Medway failing to hit the government target.

School standards minister Nick Gibb said this year's SATs tests – or national curriculum tests – are the first to test pupils on a new primary curriculum introduced in 2014, which was brought in to “raise expectations” and ensure youngsters get a good grounding in the basics.

In Kent, an average of 59 per cent achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths or saw sufficient progress in the three areas. Medway saw 49 per cent. The national average was 53 per cent with the government target 65 per cent.

Nationally, the Department for Education figures revealed 665 mainstream primaries in England fell below the government's floor standard this year.

Roger Gough, KCC cabinet member for education, said:



TABLES: Unions have been fiercely critic of SATs revamp figures calling them “misleading”

“Overall Kent has performed extremely well, and is above national and regional average.

“Historically Key Stage Two has been a weakness of primary schools in Kent but we have gradually been closing the gap, and now we're ahead. You can't quite compare with last year because the standard of testing has changed but it is important to recognise we have improved.

“Only eight schools in Kent were below the 65 per cent, and also in

progress, but they are schools that we are already working with and supporting.”

Medway's Andrew Mackness, portfolio holder for children's services, said: “Last year Medway schools were not in a good position at the bottom of national tables, but I am satisfied that improvement has been made as they have climbed 26 places. There is still a lot to do and we are committed to achieving good outcomes for young people.”

Russell Hobby, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), said: “This data is misleading and not worth the paper it is written on. This year, we saw the SATs system descend into chaos and confusion.

“Delayed and obscure guidance, papers leaked online, mistakes in test papers and inconsistent moderation made this year unmanageable for school leaders, teachers, parents and pupils.”

Business chiefs pile on pressure for decision on Lower Thames Crossing

DELAYS in announcing a route and funding for the Lower Thames Crossing have been slammed as “unacceptable”.

Pressure is growing on the government to make a decision after months of radio silence since the consultation on plans for a crossing east of Gravesend ended in March.

Many were expecting an announcement in Philip Hammond's Autumn Statement.

However, the crossing was missing from a list of funding for infrastructure projects released by the Department for Transport (DfT) following the chancellor's statement.

Now, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), which champions the economic growth of areas including Kent and Medway, has revealed it is not expecting any announcement this year, and its members have agreed to step up the pressure on MPs, ministers and the government to get the project moving.

SELEP is also enlisting the support of other local enterprise partnerships from the south of the UK to present a united front to the government.

Chairman Christian Brodie said: “The message from businesses on both sides of the Thames is unequivocal – we need a new crossing and we need it now. The current delay is unacceptable. It is short-sighted and shows a lack of ambition for growth when we need it more than ever.

“Businesses in our region overwhelmingly support Highways England's preferred route east of Gravesend.

“While Gravesend, Southend and Thurrock Councils oppose that location, the current inaction is causing delays to their own growth plans, as they cannot produce coherent strategies in an atmosphere of such uncertainty.

“SELEP is united in its view that an alternative to the current bottleneck at the Dartford is urgently needed.”

Vinci clinch £39m motorway junction construction deal

HIGHWAYS chiefs have signed a £39.1m contract for the construction of the much-discussed junction 10a of the M20 at Ashford.

To be sited approximately 700m east of the existing junction 10, it will use two bridges and connect to the existing A20 and a new dual carriageway link road built to the A2070 near Sevington. It is designed to allow for the expansion

of the town and ease traffic on the existing junction 10 which is one of the town's main pinch points.

Construction of the scheme is conditional of planning permission being granted. A consultation took place earlier in the year with 800 people attending exhibitions of the plans.

The contract has been awarded to Vinci Construction.

Farage in NY again but ‘no plans to meet the great man’

NICEL Farage is back in New York this weekend but says he has no plans to meet Donald Trump again because the president-elect is “busy with other stuff”.

The former Ukip leader, who lives in Westerham, said he would be meeting members of the controversial tycoon's team but that he is “not expecting an invite” to Trump Tower.

Mr Farage said he was “catching up with old friends who are part of his team, doing a bit of Christmas shopping, no plans to meet the great man at all”.

Mr Farage, who serves the south east as an MEP, was the first British politician to meet with Mr Trump, following his victory in the US presidential elections in November and was pictured shaking his hand.



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Scenic Railway is back on the rails once again

DREAMLAND's Scenic Railway was finally set to re-open this weekend after being out of action for almost half a year.

The Grade II-listed ride was due to re-open at noon on Saturday following the fitting of a new bespoke lift hill rope. The ride, the centrepiece of the park, has been out of action since July - thus being closed for the

peak summer months.

There was trouble last year too when the ride was not ready for the park's summer re-opening, though it was in operation over the winter and spring months.

Now it will be up and running in the run up to the festive season, with the pay-per-ride park open until Christmas Eve.



RIP: Jack Howard

Hammers pay tribute to fan, brave Jack

A BRAVE schoolboy who died earlier this month after a battle with kidney cancer was remembered by thousands of fans in the Premier League on Wednesday night.

Jack Howard, 13, attended Gravesend Grammar School and had flown to Los Angeles for treatment after generous donors pledged more than £250,000 in a bid to save him.

A dedicated West Ham fan, on the 13th minute of the match at the London Stadium against Burnley the crowd gave him a minute's applause. His siblings Callum and Lucy were mascots.

The club became aware of the family's fundraising drive, with joint-chairman David Sullivan donating £5,000 towards his treatment, with a West Ham-themed non-uniform day at his school raising a further £6,000.

The youngster previously underwent treatment for kidney cancer in 2013. He had a kidney removed before going into remission in February 2014, but the cancer returned in December last year and spread to his lungs. Stars from the club also visited his bedside while he was in hospital.

Midfielder Sam Byram said: "It's hugely saddening to hear about Jack's passing. His energy, positivity and strength were inspiring."

'Boris will battle to get justice' vows PM in hunt for holidaymaker's killer

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

THERESA May has reassured a Kent MP the government will continue its fight for justice for a constituent who was brutally killed on holiday earlier this year.

George Low, 22, from Dartford, was stabbed to death in Ayia Napa in August following an unprovoked attack which also left his friend, Ben Barker, 22, seriously wounded.

At prime minister's questions this week, Dartford MP Gareth Johnson told the House of Commons how the two culprits fled to northern Cyprus where they were arrested on unrelated matters and spoke of his fear they will be allowed to walk free. The UK has no extradition treaty with northern Cyprus.

He said: "Despite representations made by the Foreign Office, one of these men was able to simply walk free and it's feared the second man will follow shortly.

"Will the prime minister do all she



VICTIM: George Low

can to help bring justice for George Low and Ben Barker for what was an horrific, vicious attack that was completely without any provocation and has been devastating for both of their families?"

It comes after more than 4,000 people signed a petition asking the government to put pressure on the authorities to hand over the suspects to stand trial for murder.

Mrs May paid tribute to Mr Low, who friends said "was like an Adonis", and insisted Boris Johnson would continue to lead the fight for justice into the new year, having visited the area at the end of last month.

She said: "The most recent time at which this case was raised with the relevant government was by the foreign secretary during his visit on November 30 to Cyprus and he clearly set out our desire to see those guilty of this attack brought to justice.

"The Foreign and Commonwealth Office will continue to offer help and support to both families and we will continue to raise this issue."

The parents of George Low, Helen and Martyn, said: "We hope northern Cyprus and Turkey put aside their political differences with southern Cyprus and hand over the suspects to stand trial for the murder of George and attempted murder of Ben."

'Fantastic mother' is killed in A2 tragedy

THE family of a 41-year-old woman killed as she rode her Honda motorcycle on the A2 have paid tribute to a "fantastic mother and dear friend".

Lucie Keeley, from Northfleet, died after the smash on the London-bound carriageway at Wilmington on Friday, December 9. Two cars were also involved.

A statement from her family said: "Our beautiful Lucie has left behind her family including her two gorgeous children, loving partner, mother and brother and many close friends who will miss her greatly.

"Lucie was incredibly kind, patient and generous. She was a fantastic mother and a dear friend who was always there when you needed her. She was extremely creative, fun and positive, and leaves us better people for having known her. Just by being herself, Lucie really was a truly inspirational character."

Police are continuing to appeal for any witnesses to the crash to come forward.

Bridge limit to return to 70mph by spring

THE speed limit on the Sheppey Crossing is to return to 70mph in the spring, along with a host of additional safety measures - among them speed cameras.

Speeds were reduced to 50mph in July 2015 after an horrific crash which caused the death of mother and son Deborah and Marshall Roberts the year before.

Now Highways England say it will be back to 70mph, along with improved road markings and illuminated road studs by the spring.

Highways England divisional director for the south east Simon Jones said: "Following a thorough, independent review of its safety, we have decided to reinstate the national speed limit on the Sheppey Crossing. There are a minority of drivers who ignore the speed limit whatever it is, which is why we are introducing average speed enforcement over the bridge at the same time.

"In the longer term we are looking at fog detection and warning systems and variable message signs to improve safety further still. And throughout, we will continue to keep safety continually under review."

Planners give green light to 4,000 homes

PLANS to build 4,000 homes in Canterbury took a giant stride forward on Wednesday night after city councillors rubber-stamped proposals.

The application was earmarked for land both north and south of New Dover Road and the development is also expected to include two primary schools, green spaces and a 'community hub' featuring shops, food and drink outlets, a hotel and indoor sports facilities.

The decision means developer Corinthian now has detailed planning permission for 140 homes and outline approval for a further 3,860.

Access to the development will be enhanced by a fresh system of roads drawn up by bosses, including direct access to the A2 via a new interchange and a park and ride scheme. However, locals opposed to the plan say the additional traffic could cause gridlock to the city's already busy roads.

A report presented to councillors said the first 100 homes are expected to be completed by the end of March 2018, with an average of 350 homes completed each year.

Church changes rolling out after shock care home abuse

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

FURTHER evidence of a "harrowing regime" of abuse at a Gravesend children's home has been submitted in response to a report published earlier this year.

Last autumn, a review began to investigate a series of allegations about practices that took place at the Church of England-run Kendall House, which included sedating children and putting them in straitjackets.

Bishops apologised unreservedly following the revelations in July's report and urged residents to come forward and share their experiences as part of the review's addendum report.

That window has now closed and bishops from across the county have moved to praise the courage of the women affected.

James Langstaff, Bishop of Rochester, said: "Following the publication of the Kendall House Review, the Diocese of Rochester felt it important to give those former residents who had not been able to participate in the review the opportunity to share their experiences.

"The addendum to the Kendall House Review is the result. We are very grateful to all of the women who courageously came forward to tell their stories, and we recognise how challenging that was.



APOLOGETIC: Bishop of Rochester praised bravery of those coming forward

"The diocese would like to thank all of the former residents who have participated and we apologise unreservedly to them for the hurt and distress caused to them.

"The diocese has recently commissioned an independent audit of all of our safeguarding structures and resources in the light both of the Kendall House review and of current national guidance. We will be working on the recommendations of this audit over the coming weeks."

The Bishop of Dover Trevor Willmott add-

ed: "The addendum makes for difficult but essential reading.

"We are hugely grateful to the women who have come forward. They have done this so that we may learn the lessons of the past and we want to assure them that we have fully resolved to do so. We are deeply committed to creating safer spaces wherever the Church has a presence."

Any former residents wishing to receive support can call the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service on 0845 120 4550.

Bluewater gang rape probe: Four released

POLICE investigating an alleged gang rape at Bluewater on Mother's Day have released four men without charge.

Earlier this year, 11 people were arrested over a reported sex attack at a car park in Bluewater on a Sunday evening. One was released without charge at the time. Six other men – three 18-year-olds, two who are 20 and a 16-year-old have had their bail extended to January 27.

RSPB gets £94,000 for fence funding

The RSPB's Northward Hill nature reserve in Rochester has been given £94,000 to pay for 2,000 metres of fencing to protect birds' eggs from predators.

The cash comes from the landfill tax, grants and donations and it is hoped will help see a surge in the number of young lapwings fledging there.

War medals pinched

POLICE are investigating after crooks made off with a number of medals – including four for military service, including for time served in the Second World War – during a burglary in Senacre, on the outskirts of Maidstone.

The crime took place between 1.30pm and 6.45pm on Tuesday in Garden Close. Anyone with information should contact the police.



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Cop killer who tried to eat victim handed life sentence

Stefano Brizzi has been told he will serve at least 24 years for the murder of Greenhithe police officer Gordon Semple. **WARNING:** Contains graphic content.

By Emily Pennink
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

AN "evil and calculating" cannibal killer has been jailed for life for strangling a police officer during a bondage sex session and then cooking and trying to eat him.

Fan of TV drama Breaking Bad, Stefano Brizzi, 50, killed 59-year-old Gordon Semple, from Greenhithe, at his flat in south London after hooking up on gay dating app Grindr in April.

Officers called to Brizzi's flat to investigate a foul stench discovered the gruesome scene of globules of flesh in the bath and bags of dismembered body parts.

During his trial at the Old Bailey, the Italian admitted he was inspired by his favourite TV series as he tried to get away with the killing by dissolving the flesh in an acid bath.

But the crystal meth addicted former Morgan Stanley IT developer denied that he had cooked and tried to eat parts of the body with chopsticks,

saying he had no memory of it.

Brizzi was found guilty of murder and sentenced by Judge Nicholas Hilliard QC to life with a minimum of 24 years, with seven years concurrent for disposing of the body.

The court heard that evidence from an odontologist settled the matter of whether Brizzi had in fact cannibalised part of his victim.

On examining a rib discarded in the kitchen bin, the expert found that a bite mark did in fact match the defendant's lower teeth.

Prosecutor Crispin Aylett QC said: "It would be open to my lord to sentence on the basis Mr Brizzi did indeed attempt to eat part of PC Semple's body."

In mitigation, Sallie Bennett-Jenkins QC said: "The behaviour can only be ascribed to taking of the drug crystal meth, which, as the court will know, has appalling effects on those who become addicted to it."

Brizzi had "absolutely no recollection" of eating PC Semple and was "utterly horrified by it", the barrister added.

In a victim impact statement read

to the court, PC Semple's older brother, Ronald Semple, said his sibling, who had served the police for 30 years, had been highly regarded as a "Dixon of Dock Green character".

PC Semple was a "caring and gentle person" and "much loved" by his family, who were left devastated with the news of his murder, the court heard.

Sentencing, Judge Hilliard said there were "terrible features" of the case and that Brizzi's drug addiction had ruined his life.

He told him: "Regret you express now for Mr Semple's death has to be seen against what you did over a number of days to his body."

The defendant sat in the dock with his head bowed throughout the hearing.

The trial had heard that Brizzi arranged through Grindr for a "hot, dirty, sleazy session" at his flat near London's Tate Modern gallery on April 1.

According to Brizzi, PC Semple died when a dog leash he had been wearing slipped as they played a "strangulation game".

But a pathologist concluded that,



while strangulation was a possible cause of death, it would have taken minutes rather than moments, as the defendant had claimed.

In the days after the killing, Brizzi was caught on CCTV buying buckets, a perforated metal sheet and cleaning



products from a DIY store.

He then set about dismembering the body, stripping the flesh, burning some in the oven and mixing some with acid in the bath.

PC Semple's long-term partner, Gary Meeks, reported him missing when he failed to return to their home near Dartford.

Neighbours complained about the stench coming from Brizzi's flat and eventually called police, who came across the grisly sight of "globules" of flesh floating in the bath, bags con-

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SCENE: Police made the grisly find at Brizzi's London home. He had attempted to dispose of PC Semple's body in an acid bath then tried to cook and eat some of his body parts. Victim Gordon Semple, left. All pictures: PA

taining bones and a part of PC Semple's head, and pools of human fat in the oven.

Brizzi, who was wearing pink underpants and sunglasses, was arrested as officers realised the enormity of what they had found.

The court heard there was evidence in the kitchen that Brizzi had chopped up the Inverness-born officer with a variety of utensils and may have even used chopsticks to eat morsels of cooked meat.

Following his arrest, Brizzi admitted killing and trying to dissolve the body of the policeman because "Satan told me to".

During the killing, he said he had turned away a man on his doorstep who had arrived for a sex party organised on Grindr.

Brizzi said: "I was right in the middle of strangling Gordon and I said to him 'Look, this is not the right time now, people are falling ill and it's a mess'."

He also told police that he had "chucked" some of PC Semple's body into the Thames and thrown away his police badge and belongings.

A human foot was later found by a member of Thames Mudlark Club near Bermondsey Wall.

The court heard that Brizzi had gone to Crystal Meth Anonymous meetings, but upset people by wearing a Breaking Bad T-shirt as the show "glorified" the drug.

In his home, police found a mask



AFTERMATH: Left, chief crown prosecutor Baljit Ubhey and killer Brizzi

and dog leash with PC Semple's DNA on it as well as a copy of the Satanic Bible.

Giving evidence, Brizzi, who has HIV, told jurors that PC Semple died in a "state of erotic bliss".

The two officers who discovered the body parts in Brizzi's home were commended by Judge Hilliard for dealing with a situation that "no amount of training or experience" could have prepared them for.

Afterwards, chief crown prosecutor for London, Baljit Ubhey, said: "Stefano Brizzi learned he will remain in prison for the next 24 years for the horrific crimes he committed.

"An evil and calculating man, Briz-

zi lied to the police and then to the court, claiming that Mr Semple's tragic death was caused when a sex game went horribly wrong.

"We know this will have been a very difficult time for the family and friends of Mr Semple. I hope the outcome today provides some comfort to them."

Paying tribute to how her team dealt with the "challenging" case, she said: "They had to sift through many thousands of social media messages and piece together the events of that evening, which was difficult bearing in mind the lengths that Brizzi went to, to remove traces of his crime and cover his tracks."

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Kristian, Project Manager

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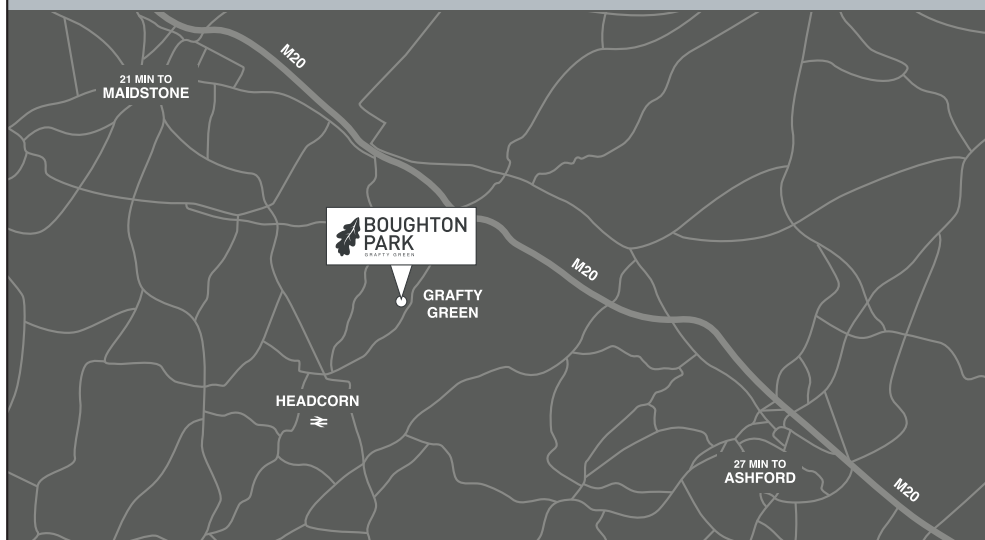
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Clouds gather as authorities get angry over latest funding moves

Tom Pyman on how tempers are starting to fray in Kent and Medway over Whitehall's financial support

THE leader of Medway Council admits he is "fed up with the way government treats councils" after it was announced the taxpayer would have to fund the adult social care crisis.

Communities secretary Sajid Javid announced in the House of Commons this week an allowed increase in the designated 'social care precept' on our council tax bills, first introduced 12 months ago by former chancellor George Osborne.

The increase will see Kent County Council and Medway Council given the option of raising the precept from the current two per cent to three per cent over the next two years.

Mr Javid also revealed a £240m "adult social care grant" will be created for 2017/18 by reforms to an existing scheme designed to encourage councils to build extra properties, known as the New Homes Bonus.

However, Medway leader Alan Jarrett laughed off any suggestion the announcement was good news for local authorities and remained coy as to whether his authority would take advantage of the ability to hike council tax further.

"They are taking money from the New Homes Bonus and putting it somewhere else, so it's a reduction in our non-ringfenced funding," he told KoS.

"I'm fed up of the way government treats councils - they should be the ones funding social care because it's a national problem created by interfering and now they are expecting the council tax payer to pick up the bill."

"The previous Labour government started this decline and it's just gone on and on."

"We'll take a look at it and make a decision but we've already factored a two per cent rise into our plans."

"That gave us around £2m last year but these precepts are not doing much more than fund ongoing national living wage pressures, so the government can't pretend this money will actually fund social care when it's being gobbled up by wage increases - it's very frustrating."

Asked if it would change local perceptions of the Conservative Party, Cllr Jarrett replied: "I don't know but I doubt it when you consider the current political environment."

"The party is doing well and the opposition is nowhere to be seen, but I'm fed up of local government being treated this way to a fanfare of trumpets."



GLOOM: Clouds above Rochester as Medway Council leader Alan Jarrett blasts latest announcement by communities secretary Sajid Javid



FRUSTRATED: Medway Council leader Alan Jarrett

Kent County Council leader Paul Carter echoed his Tory colleague's frustration but said it was unlikely the authority will increase the precept to three per cent.

"We all know the pressure we have been put under, the market is really being squeezed and we need to have a strong and sustainable market or the situation is going to get critical."

"There is some good news in the sense that we have got national government in a position where there needs to be serious conversations in the coming months about funding social care and I look forward to being part of those conversations."

"But this doesn't solve the massive underlying problem as people need help and support from social services. "The precept actually makes very

“I'm fed up of the way government treats councils - they should be the ones funding social care because it's a national problem created by interfering and now they are expecting the council tax payer to pick up the bill”

little difference, it will be up to the group to decide in January whether we increase it or not but I suspect we will not.

"I think it's common knowledge that local government has taken a greater degree of pain and savings than anywhere else in the public sector and it would be nice if they recognised and appreciated local government for being innovative and transformational."

"There needs to be a fundamental review of how local government is funded by central government and it cannot be fair and equitable that residents at inner London councils like Kensington pay £600 when it's £1,500 for shire councils."

"Nobody likes having increases in council tax but most people accept that we have no choice but to

put it up."

Finance chiefs warned last month the future could look "absolutely disastrous" for local government if it does not receive more help from Whitehall, with KCC currently looking to slash £13m from its adult social care budget.

Last week saw dozens of protesters demonstrate outside County Hall ahead of KCC's full council meeting, where the extent of the strain the authority is under was revealed to councillors.

However, Cllr Carter admitted things would be eased by the introduction of the Better Care Fund - a pot of cash originally designated for health that can be used for social care - in the near future.

The fund will bring KCC just over £17m in 2018/19 and £33m the following year to help ease pressures.

Labour councillors on KCC slammed the announcement, with deputy group leader Roger Truelove saying: "We have known for years that the ageing of our population was going to put enormous pressure on local authority care services."

"The crisis now is not only making adult care services unsustainable but it is also putting unacceptable pressure on the NHS too."

"This cannot be resolved by fiddling around with council tax, it really will not be adequate and it will inevitably lead to disproportionate gaps in quality of care from one au-

thority to another.

"Government, we are often told, is about making difficult decisions and deciding on priorities."

"This is a national priority but this government is running away from its responsibility and passing the issue on to local authorities and council taxpayers"

In a statement to MPs on Thursday, Mr Javid said: "Over recent months we have listened to, heard and understood calls from across the board saying funding is needed sooner in order to meet short term pressures."

"The precept puts money raising powers in the hands of local leaders who best understand the needs of their communities and are best placed to respond."

"In recognition of the immediate challenges that are faced in the care market, we will now allow local councils to raise this funding sooner if they wish."

"Councils will be granted the flexibility to raise the precept by up to three per cent next year and the year after."

"This will provide a further £208m [nationally] to spend on adult social care in 2017/18 and £444m in 2018/19."

"These changes together with the changes we've made to the New Homes Bonus will make almost £900m of additional funding for adult social care available over the next two years."



CONTROVERSY: Thanet District Council's headquarters in Margate were once again the scene of disputes over the authority's handling of two long-running sagas

Thanet council in the firing line over Dreamland and Manston

Tom Pyman on yet another week of criticism endured by the authority over its two major projects...

THANET District Council's handling of Dreamland, which led to a £2.2m overspend, has been described as "an absolute tragedy".

A damning report presented to councillors this week praised the authority for taking the project "forward in a new direction" each time a risk materialised, but highlighted a number of issues which led to delays and the overspend during the first phase of the scheme.

Among these factors, auditors said, were a high level of staff turnover, poor risk evaluation and weaknesses in project management.

Thanet North MP Sir Roger Gale said the council had let down park operator Sands Heritage, which was placed into administration earlier this year, after racking up millions of pounds of debt.

"Thanet council did not deliver on its promised deal," he told us.

"It didn't deliver the historical rides or the Scenic Railway until after the end of the first season, and when it did it had a cheap pulley rope which proved inadequate which is why it was then out of play for the whole of the next season.

"The management of the whole contract by the council and its team was lamentable, which is why Sands Heritage found itself in this situation.

"Nick Connington [chief executive of Sands Heritage] and Eddie Kemsley [since-departed chief executive of Dreamland] were tremendously committed to the whole idea and it's an absolute tragedy Thanet didn't get its act together."

The Conservative MP also highlighted a settlement of almost £1m paid by the council to Sands Heritage last year to settle claims and counter-claims.

"Sands should have had £2.5m-£3m in compensation but the court case would have taken two years so they had to take the money and run," he said.

"Given a fair wind they probably could have got away with it but they had a foul wind from TDC and I think it's largely culpable and now we have to try and rescue it.

"Here we've got some national heritage and it needs to be run properly because once it is gone, you never get it back."

The three biggest risks highlighted by the report were a project overrun, leading to additional costs, discovery of unforeseen costs and failure to contain Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) costs – all of which auditors said had "maximum impact" on the project.

It highlighted six recommendations of how the council could respond as part of an action plan.

These included better planning of potential consequences to terminate or put on hold the project where necessary, monthly updates on project risk management, introducing a filing system, building in a 'worst case scenario' for plans, implementing milestone break point options and consideration of the consequences of triggering a grant clawback.

The report was presented by Christine Parker, head of East Kent Internal Audit Partnership, which works independently for Dover, Canterbury, Shepway and Thanet councils.

Meanwhile, Toby Hunter of Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company, which formerly owned the land, is seeking a multi-million pound settlement after the council used a compulsory purchase order to obtain the site and felt any potential payment should have



been included in the report.

He told us: "Clearly the council have failed at every level to spend money wisely and to implement the scheme.

"We are very happy with our evaluation of the site at between £16m-£22m."

The council has repeatedly claimed its estimation of the valuation of the land is "significantly lower".

Earlier this year, Mr Hunter submitted an offer to the council to draw a line under the dispute by taking back ownership plus £1m to cover costs – an offer laughed off by council leader Chris Wells.

Responding to the report, a council spokesperson said: "The corporate management team has agreed to the six recommendations in the action plan, therefore a progress review will be undertaken in six months' time and reported back for noting to this panel."

The council was also forced to defend itself this week over Manston Airport, dismissing claims by pro-Manston campaigners that it was not being transparent by excluding the public from part of a crunch planning meeting as "simply wrong".

American investment firm Riv-

erOak, which intends to submit a Development Consent Order to return the former airport site to operational aviation use, urged the council to postpone Wednesday's meeting of the planning committee in Margate, and publish details of the agenda item, 'Change of Use Appeals – Manston Airport', which are unavailable for public scrutiny.

RiverOak had written to the council's director of corporate governance and monitoring officer, Tim Howes, challenging the council's recommendation to withhold its report and planned discussion from the public.

Spokesperson George Yerrall said in a statement: "We remain concerned at the lack of transparency in Thanet council's scrutiny and decision making processes in relation to the Manston Airport site.

"The future of the Manston Airport site, no matter what your view, is of significant importance to not only Thanet but to the wider Kent region and beyond.

"The public interest is therefore not being served by the withholding of relevant information and we are not satisfied with reasons for doing so that were provided in the council's response.

"We note, however, Mr Howes' comment that the recommendation could be reversed and urge the council to fulfil its proper obligations to its electorate by postponing the meeting, publishing the papers in full and ensuring these discussions are held in public."

Sir Roger was also critical of the decision, saying "the current administration's attempts to manipulate transparency are outrageous".

However, the council hit back at its critics and slammed RiverOak for making a "misleading" statement.

Mr Howes told us prior to the meet-

ing: "As has previously been explained to RiverOak, the planning committee meeting will be dealing with a number of planning applications unrelated to Manston Airport.

"The meeting is open to the public for all those agenda items and will not be postponed.

"Council officers have recommended that the report relating to the change of use appeals at Manston Airport is considered without the presence of the press and public because it includes legal advice on the council's appeal case.

"If this legal advice were disclosed it would prejudice the council's case and increase the risk of costs being awarded against the council in the planning appeal.

"Whilst officers have recommended that the matter be dealt with in private, it is for the planning committee to decide during the course of the meeting, whether or not to accept that recommendation.

"The council would like to stress that all of the above matters are clear from the committee papers for the meeting so to suggest the council has not been 'transparent' is simply wrong."

Businessmen Chris Musgrave and Trevor Cartner last month sold the Discovery Park estate in Sandwich to focus fully on their Stone Hill Park project – plans to develop 2,500 homes, jobs and leisure facilities on the site – which were submitted to the council earlier this year.

Meanwhile, a report by consultants Avia Solutions then concluded that airport operations at Manston were "very unlikely to be financially viable in the longer term and almost certainly not possible in the period to 2031".



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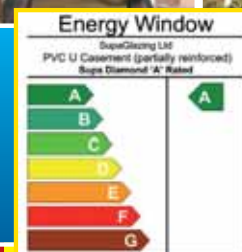
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Food banks set for festive surge as benefits and incomes shrink

It remains a shocking sign of modern life that so many families have to rely on emergency food packs to survive. **Adele Couchman** reports...

FOOD banks across the county say they are expecting a sharp spike in demand over the Christmas period – with the introduction of a controversial benefits cap last month likely to see that surge continue into the new year.

It has been an increasing sign of the desperation of many in recent years that food banks have sprung in more locations across the county, fuelled by stalling low incomes and reduced benefits.

According to the Trussell Trust, the UK's largest food bank network, figures for the financial year 2015/16 revealed, nationally, more than 1.1 million three-day emergency food parcels had been handed out – up two per cent on the year before.

And with the introduction of the benefit cap in November, that figure is unlikely to slow down.

Ian Childs is the project manager for Medway Food-

bank. Operating in nine distribution centres across the towns, it makes up one third of the Trussell Trust's operations in Kent.

He told KoS that 5,274 people had been helped by the charity over the last 12 months – an almost 20 per cent increase compared with the same period last year. Out of those, 1,905 were children.

He explained: "I've heard all sorts of things people have to say about food banks, where they assume drunk alcoholics and homeless wasters are the only people who have to use them."

"But this clearly isn't the case, seeing as one third of the food we supply here ends up in the bellies of children."

Mr Childs said that 45 per cent of people who visit the distribution centres say they are affected by benefit changes and delays – something he fears will continue to rise.

"All the factors we hear about on the news, including austerity, debt issues, those

affected by the benefit cap and increasing restrictions and delays on benefits are what contributes to our numbers," he adds.

"And with all these changes it's only going to increase. I suspect the monthly payment of Universal Credit, for example, will be a rocky transition for a lot of people who haven't managed their finances over the years. Now they are suddenly expected to budget properly without falling behind at the end of the year."

"Winter is generally a busier time. We have a large number of families who come to us who have to make the decision whether to heat or to eat. As the cold weather increases, there is a massive impact on the budget for a lot of families."

The trust says last December saw a 59 per cent spike in the number of food parcels given to people last December.

The benefits cap – which limits the income households receive in certain benefits –



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has been reduced from £26,000 a year to £20,000 a year. While the government says the policy is "a clear incentive to move into a job", it has been criticised by unions and campaigners – with Church leaders saying the move would hit children the hardest.

Universal Credit, meanwhile, is a monthly figure paid into the bank accounts of recipients – unlike before where many saw their rent paid directly to their landlord.

Those running the food bank in Gravesend said over the last two years, demand for food packages in December had risen by in excess of 80 per cent.

Explains David Idowu, project manager for the Trussell Trust's Gravesend food bank: "It's always busy here, and it gets busier as we go on every year."

"Most of the clients we get through our door have been affected by benefit changes, people who have lost their jobs but also those who are working but get paid so little."

"The economic crisis, benefit cuts and austerity has hit the most vulnerable people."

The food bank has been in operation since 2012 and has dished out 3,596 three-day emergency food supplies to those in need in the past year.

People are referred to the charity by a doctor, social worker or other professional who can identify those in need of an emergency supply of food.

In a typical parcel, individuals and families can expect three days worth of non-perishable tinned and dried food items including cereal, soup and pasta – all of which have been donated by the local community.

Mr Idowu adds: "“Everyone is two months away from using a food bank if they fall on hard times, but most people come to us feeling embarrassed, ashamed and disillusioned

“Everyone who leaves will have their food in a supermarket bag, so no one will know they have come away from a food bank. Our goal is to ensure we restore dignity to people.

“Over the Christmas period we do have an increase of people coming to us as it's an expensive time of year. We also notice that parents with children on free school meals also really struggle when they're off for the holidays for a number of weeks.

“During the winter we try to organise a Christmas party and give presents to children so they don't feel left out. There is a big ceremony at New Wine Church in Gravesend, where the church gives out turkeys and hampers to the most needy who are using the food bank.”

Chris Norman is the operations manager for The Family Foodbank – an emergency food supplier run by the Children and Families charity, based in Ashford.

It works with the likes of FareShare Kent, part of UK-wide organisation which redistributes surplus food to disadvantaged people.

After starting in Sheerness in 2012 to provide support for families recently made redundant from the closure of the Thamesteel site, the food bank now operates across Swale, Maidstone, Thanet and Ashford.

Thanks to donations from the public the foodbank is able to provide parcels to families containing up to 60 meals.

In 2015, 1,573 food boxes were given out to hungry families and in-



RISE: Chris Norman is operations manager for The Family Foodbank operating across the county

dividuals – with Mr Norman also expecting a rise in this year's numbers.

"With the benefit cap introduced in the past few weeks, we suspect that will give us a spike in demand," he said.

"We normally have a slight rush just before Christmas every year, as a lot of people will come to us trying to

sort out their big family day but without the means to afford any food.

"It must be soul destroying to have to fall back on charities, and our job is help those in need when they have nowhere else to go."

Concludes Ian Childs, from the Medway Foodbank: "I've had people who have come to me and thought

about doing themselves in when they can't provide for their kids. So what we do here is give a little something to make Christmas as it should be.

"At least being able to give a parent a small gift to give their children will make them feel more human and less guilty about not being able to support their families."



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YouTube channel's county twist

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

AN online channel has been launched on video streaming website YouTube focusing on revealing the county's hidden history.

The Kent History Channel is the brainchild of local writer and historian George Chittenden. He says he was shocked to see it had not been done properly before.

The award-winning tour guide said he is producing weekly videos lasting 10 minutes each, giving a detailed snapshot on particular aspects of Kent's long history.

The first one, called Castles on the Coast, has already gone live, produced and directed by his partner Adina Alexandra Simion who studied film, radio and TV at Canterbury Christ Church University.

They are written and narrated by Mr Chittenden.

He said: "The first one should be of great interest to the people of Deal, as it covers the invasion threat of 1539 and the events that led to Henry VIII fortifying our stretch of coast to protect the town's anchorage.

"History is a topic you can never learn enough about and I've always felt privileged to live in an area with such a rich and diverse past."

Mr Chittenden conducts historic tours on the River Stour in Canter-

bury, as well as Walmer Castle and its gardens where he works as a property steward.

Previous novels he has written include works on Deal's smuggling past.

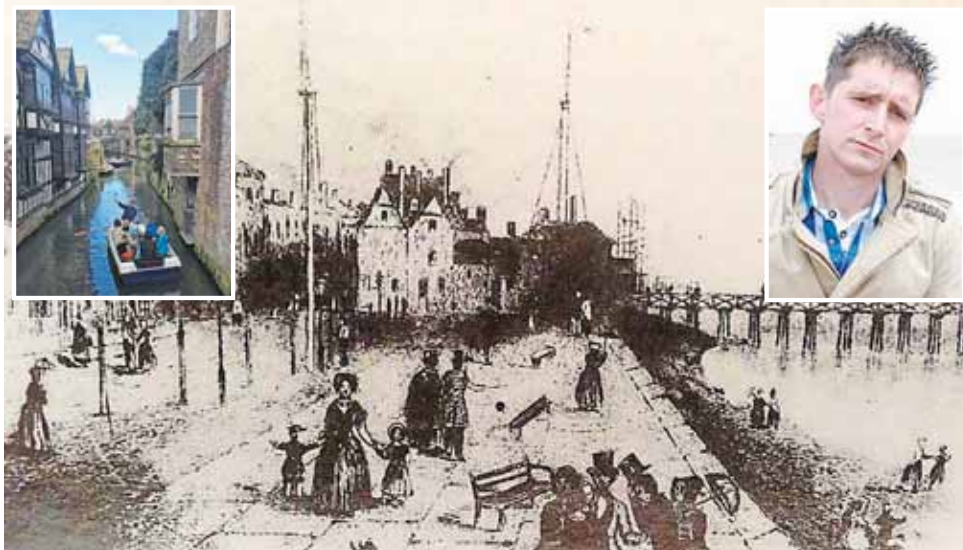
During a tour of South America this week, the 34-year-old told us: "I have performed thousands of guided tours in Kent to visitors from all over the world, plus have been lucky enough to have some appearances on television and radio."

He said: "Growing up in the town of Deal I heard countless stories of smugglers and the shady world of organised crime that had gripped the town centuries early, stories that fuelled my imagination.

"I began bringing Kent's history to the public's attention over a decade ago when I first began working as a tour guide in Canterbury on the River Stour in my early 20s, and early on I struggled to fit so much information into a single tour.

"Occasionally when asked a question I couldn't answer I would go home and do some research finding myself being led down a completely different path in our county's history. I would soon adjust my tour to accommodate this new information, and sadly some of the previous content would be pushed aside.

"As a tour guide I was always amazed at how much information I would pick up from the public, often I would talk about the bombing raids in Canterbury during the Second



OLD: Deal's original pier, main image, with George Chittenden, top right, and his Canterbury tours, top left

World War only to discover that I had people in the group who had lived through it and during these moments I would fall silent and let them tell us all their experiences, always listening and learning."

Mr Chittenden added: "Working for English Heritage as an historic property steward and guiding groups around Walmer Castle and gardens only cemented my opinion that we have far more history here than any-

where else on earth. Kent has more castles than any other county in England, it has the oldest brewery, the oldest vineyard and the oldest church in the whole of Britain. It's where Christianity was introduced to Britain with thousands of pagans being baptised here at the hand of our county's very own king.

"Kent also has sat at the forefront of virtually every invasion our country has ever faced, from Julius Cae-

sar's invasion with the Roman Empire all the way through to the Second World War, and our county's motto remains 'Invicta' meaning 'unconquered'."

He added: "I've always felt privileged to have such a wealth of fascinating history on our doorstep I feel the Kent History Channel will never run out of engaging aspects of Kent's past to present to viewers for a real journey into the county's past."

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Impact of Post Office closures hits elderly most

By Adele Couchman

adele.couchman@archant.co.uk

CAMPAIGNERS across the county have blasted the rising number of Post Office branch closure, saying their relocation is having a major impact on the elderly and disabled.

Increasingly, Crown Post Offices – the bigger dedicated branches normally found in town centres – have been closed, with services frequently switched to share premises with existing stores nearby.

It comes as a result of a declining subsidy from central government which has been slashed by £130m in three years to just £80. And the situation is unlikely to improve.

Earlier this year, the Communication Workers' Union (CWU), which represents postal workers, said the Post Office was in "crisis and heading for ruin", claiming it had been left floundering since its split from Royal Mail in 2012.

Meanwhile, the government says it has invested £2bn in modernising the network over recent years and insists it has no closure programme.

Instead, however, Crown branches are being closed and counters switched instead to high street retailers of supermarkets.

And that's having an impact of communities in the county which are seeing the traditional glue that held their high streets together, coming unstuck.

In Tonbridge, the Crown branch faces closure with plans to replace it with a smaller counter service in WH-Smith, some 100 metres away.

The Post Office insists it will retain its Crown status, but a petition opposing it, organised by the local Conservative MP, has already attracted more than 1,500 signatures.

Tonbridge and Malling MP Tom Tugendhat explained to KoS any such

move would be a "blow" to the townfolk.

He explained: "The current Post Office we have is ideally positioned for those with mobility issues where they can get in and out easily with it being right next to two disabled bays and the biggest car park in Tonbridge.

"They are not going to cut any services, but moving into a smaller store will certainly make it harder for people to access them.

"I'm not against making the Post Office more economically sustainable, but given that the Post Office is subsidised it should be accessible and the best it can be for the community that use it."

The Post Office has suffered a decline over recent years with a gradual migration to online services previously accessed over the counter, and a decline in those using Post Office savings accounts.

Tonbridge Town Team chair Howard Porter echoed similar concerns about the move.

He said: "We want to retain a full range of services, and it would be a massive blow to the community if the accessibility of the Post Office was to fall.

"At the moment, for the elderly if they have to go further away that will make just their lives more difficult.

"I went in there on Monday and it's heaving with people, and if it went to a WHSmith there would be the question of whether there would be enough room.

"It's hard to believe there would be the same amount of service we already have now, and from my experience it doesn't seem as if demand is falling in Tonbridge."

The public consultation about relocating the Tonbridge branch ended on November 16. The Post Office says it is now reviewing the feedback before making a final decision.



PETITION: Tonbridge MP Tom Tugendhat during last month's collection of signatures to fight closure plans

And while Tonbridge is going through the process now, there are many other areas of the county who have already seen their dedicated Post Office disappear.

Maidstone Post Office on Bank Street closed earlier this year and is now in a WHSmith store in Week Street, along with the Canterbury and Folkestone branches moving into WHSmith branches in 2007 and 2008.

Clive English, a Maidstone councillor, said of the Week Street move: "I don't think the Post Office had a lot of choice as the landlord wanted them out of the existing premises, but the move has not gone smoothly.

"Moving a wheelchair in and out of the premises has proved very difficult for people, and the store is even less accessible than where it was before.

"A couple of blind people I have spoken to have found it really hard to navigate and there is no seating

"It's like squeezing a quart into a pint pot in there."

Whitstable saw the closure of its branch in Gladstone Road before it operated out a temporary cabin in the car park, then later setting up a counter in a local church in one of the more innovative changes, driven by the local community.

Canterbury's former Post Office in St George's Street has long since located to the other end of the city centre and now resides at the back of the WH-Smith's store.

It too has prompted concerns about levels of accessibility in the revamped store.

"There is a real issue with disability access. A number of times the lift has broken down, and there is a total lack of consideration for the elderly population", explains Paul Cole, the CEO of Age UK Maidstone and a Canterbury resident.

"The lift isn't big enough to fit a mo-

bility scooter in there, and it's not at all designed with the thought of disabled people using the service."

He added: "I understand the Post Office has to make a number of savings, but I do not think the elderly population has been consulted properly and they are the ones who are more likely to rely on it."

Canterbury MP Julian Brazier shared the concerns. He said: "The problem with the arrangement is not having it in WHSmith – the problem is that it is upstairs, something I have been concerned about all along. Post Offices should be on the ground floor for reasons of accessibility."

Former Canterbury councillor and spokesperson for the local Liberal Democrats group, James Flanagan, said he heard from a number of concerned residents when the move was made.

He explained: "One of the issues in Canterbury is accessibility, and with the Post Office being right at the back of the building and up a set of stairs some people find that quite difficult.

"Originally, the Post Office was located on the ground floor and from what I recall there were several more counters there.

"We can't let the Post Office go, but there is a real concern about it being accessible."

Former Shepway Liberal Democrat councillor Lynne Beaumont campaigned against the closure of the Folkestone Post Office when it moved to WHSmith in 2007.

She said: "Less service is better than no service, but it's still not good enough.

"It's just not the same community spirit at all.

"There's so much talk about the elderly and loneliness in society, and a lot of older people used to go in the Post Office for their pensions, have a chat and

get to know the workers. It's just not like that anymore.

"You have to queue longer, and there aren't as many counters as what there were before. It's like cattle herding in there – it's not a pleasant experience."

The Post Office says modernising the branch network – which includes relocating and franchising some of the directly managed Crown branches – is key to ensuring the future sustainability.

It also says it remains fully committed to enabling full accessibility for elderly and disabled customers.

A spokesperson said: "Access for all our customers, including disabled people, is very important to us. The Post Office Accessibility Guide, endorsed by Disability Rights UK, sets out our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, and the standards expected of our franchisees in terms of disability training, provision for accessible parking, and access to premises to ensure that customers – including wheelchair users – have sufficient space to access and use branches.

"We have run some Post Office branches in first floor locations in WH-Smith stores for years. Lifts accommodate people with pushchairs and wheelchairs and include tactile markings and audible announcement. They are regularly maintained.

"If for any reason customers are unable to access a first floor, alternative arrangements are put in a place from a designated till point at a ground floor retail counter as required."

■ Have you experienced problems with changes in your local Post Office? Share your experiences and join the debate. Write to us at: The Editor, KoS, Kent House, 81 Station Road, Ashford TN23 1PP. Or email editorial@kosmedia.co.uk. We'll feature some of the best on our letters' page.



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Welcome

CAN you believe it – but this time next weekend it will be Christmas Day! Seems unbelievable that it should have come round so fast and amid such a flurry of open advent calendar windows and all-too-familiar festive pop hits.

Hopefully you'll be ready for the biggest weekend of the year, but if not, don't get concerned – you've got a whole week to go and the most amazing city on your doorstep.

Because whatever you're looking for you can be sure Canterbury can provide it.

From gifts for those family and friends who are always so difficult to buy for, to romantic gestures or the big name presents every child is clamouring for, it's all here.

Not only is the city centre a

perfect blend of the major chains and flourishing independents, but we're surrounded too by those big stores on the outskirts of the city to ensure every need and taste is catered for.

Of course, it's not all about present buying is it? There are nights out to organise, food to order in for entertaining, and, most importantly, the chance to spend some quality time with those who mean the most to you.

So if it's a night out full of cock-tails, fizz and dancing, or a romantic candlelit meal for two, then simply stroll into Canterbury and let your tastebuds trot across the huge array of different menus for you to enjoy.

There can be no group more captivated by the festive season though than children and they are well catered for too with

trails and the chance to meet Father Christmas too.

You'll find plenty of inspiration for the entire family in this special Christmas edition.

What's more, if you have a mince pie too many or Santa brought a bike for someone in your household, we also take a look at some of the great rides you can enjoy in and around the city. What better way to blow away the cobwebs than hopping on your bike and taking a leisurely and picturesque ride through woodland and up into Whitstable for the sea air and some festive fish and chips?

Or perhaps further along the coast to Herne Bay for a stroll along the promenade?

Whatever you do, we wish you all a very merry Christmas and happy new year.

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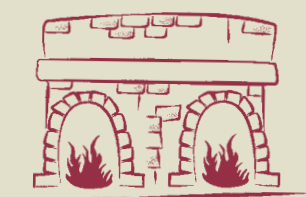
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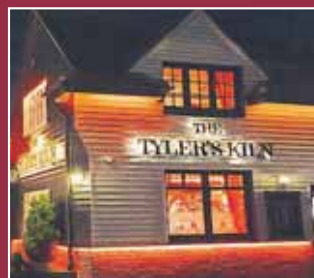
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Get out and soak up festive atmosphere

CHRISTMAS

By Chris Murphy



ENJOY: From carols at the cathedral, below, to simply shopping with family and friends, above, there's truly something for everyone and all age groups as we approach Christmas Day



IN AN era of internet shopping, it is easy to forget the festive delights of a stroll through a city so defined by its architecture and perfectly designed for those last minute gifts.

With the big day just a week away, why not soak up the atmosphere and head into the city centre?

For many, of course, the cathedral will be the centre attention and its famous carol concerts will almost certainly see queues around the famous building with both events – on the evening of December 23 and the afternoon of December 24, being 'first come first served'. Both are always hugely in demand. There's also a special Demelza charity carol concert on December 19, to help raise funds for the children's hospice.

If you enjoy your communal singing, *al fresco*, then on Christmas Eve, there's the Lord Mayor of Canterbury's open air community carol singing in Rose Lane just after 6pm. The rest of the city will be busy too with the Christmas at Whitefriars event running until Christmas Eve including its famous German-style market and the chance to meet Father Christmas before he sets off on his trip around the world.

There is a Christmas trail at Westgate Gardens, ideal for children, with no need to book. Anyone interested can meet up at the Toddler's Cove car park.

The Magical Medieval Christmas is back at the Canterbury Tales tourist attraction in St Margaret's Street and

has long been heralded as one of the best in the country.

On December 17, there is a seasonal market running between 11am and 2pm at the Westgate Hall Farmers' Market, which is a great place to stock up on all those last minute goodies.

And don't forget tickets are still available for performances of the acclaimed pantomime at the Marlowe Theatre – this year starring popular TV and radio presenter Stephen Mulhern.

Lisa Carlson, of the Canterbury Connected Business Improvement District, explains: "Canterbury ticks every box for the festive season – from carol services to Christmas markets, from theatre to cinema and from live music to lovely cafes.

"Meet Father Christmas in Whitefriars or at The Canterbury Tales, visit Christmas markets throughout the city, and enjoy Canterbury's huge variety of cafes, restaurants and pubs for a cosy hot chocolate or scrumptious meal. Of course the city has that must-see attraction - The Marlowe Theatre with its award-winning pantomime and this year it's Dick Whittington.

"With so much to see, do and experience, you might even want to stay over; what could be nicer than dining in the city late and then getting up before the crowds the next morning to see the city's streets at their most tranquil."

So there's no excuse – enjoy the city and put the cheer into your Christmas.



FUN: The city's streets are a winter wonderland this season



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Get ready for a night to remember

NIGHTS OUT

By Chris Britcher

LIKE a finely blended cocktail, Canterbury's demographic lends itself perfectly to providing an ideal night out for the festive season - whether it's an all night affair or simply a romantic dinner for two.

By taking a blend of its youthful university population, mixing it with a city rich in architectural splendour flavoured with a love of its own history, and garnishing it with the modern, Canterbury cre-

ates an intoxicating mix for those looking to put the jingle bells into their night out.

From the splendour of the likes of Bramley's Cocktail Bar in Orange Street, to the lively atmosphere of The Cuban in the High Street, there's no shortage of places to start - or indeed spend your evening - sipping a cool Mojito or two. Perhaps sitting in a former police cell next to Westgate Towers will add a certain something to your night out in which case why not try Champagne or a cocktail at the Pound Bar and Kitchen.

If traditional pubs are more your preference, then you'll be spoilt for

choice too.

What about trying out the city's first micropub, opened earlier this year, the Thomas Tallis Alehouse in Northgate. There's no bar, so you'll order from your seat from its wide selection of beers. And chat is the entertainment laid on for you to enjoy.

Or what about The Old Buttermarket? Tardis-like, it is a stone's throw from the magnificent cathedral gates and the ideal place to arrange to meet while enjoying a drink.

For those who find the traditional sound of the bell for last orders is just a prompt to move to the next place, then Club Chemistry remains a hugely popular venue in Station Road East. The biggest club in Canterbury, you can see out the night and then into the wee small hours while dancing to the latest sounds.

If that all sounds a little too, shall we say, enthusiastic, then what about heading out for a meal instead?

The city is awash with fabulous places to wine and dine in a variety of atmospheres and to suit all pockets.

There are the classics like Marlowe's, and the newcomers such as the Corner House on the ring road in what was once the Coach House pub. Or there's the Ambrette offering its award-winning fusion of Asian and British food. Or what about Chapman's Seafood Bar, the ever popular Cafe des Amis or Cafe du Soleil, or maybe Deeson's will



float your boat?

So whether you're after a memorable works' Christmas do, a night of music and laughter with friends, a cosy chat with family, or a delicious dinner with a loved one, then the good news is that you will be spoiled for choice thanks to the wide range of venues in Canterbury.

And we haven't even spoken about all the wonderful country pubs and exciting restaurants

which sit outside the city centre - so many of which are worth a visit. Nor how a short taxi or bus ride can whisk you into Whitstable with its large number of pubs and restaurants, all within close walking distance.

It's Christmas - so treat yourselves to a great night out or make sure you see the new year in with style. There's a warm welcome waiting for you.





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On your bike, for a healthy trip out

CYCLING

By Chris Murphy

CHRISTMAS is a time of indulgence – and why not, we all deserve a little time in the year to let our hair down after all.

But after one too many mince pies, there can be no better way to burn off some of those excess calories than by jumping on a bicycle and taking a ride.

After all, not only is it good for you, but it gives you a chance to see parts of the places you live and work every day like you never have before.

David Young is the network development manager in Kent for Sustrans, a UK charity that enables and encourages people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day.

Mr Young told us: “As well as its many ancient buildings, vibrant shops, bars and restaurants, the city has become a cycle route hub for east Kent and a perfect base for cycling holidays or a day out by bike.

“The Norman cathedral still dominates the skyline as you approach the city, giving 21st century visitors the same sense of awe as their medieval counterparts.

“Cycling isn’t just a rewarding

and invigorating way to explore Canterbury – regular cycling has enormous health benefits too. Think of it as one of the best physical and mental makeovers you can get – and it’s free after the cost of the bike and its upkeep.”

There are some amazing routes in and around the city, he said. None more so than the chance to visit the coast far quicker than you think and with barely a car in sight.

“The Crab and Winkle Way is a 7.5-mile, mainly traffic-free route on National Cycle Route 1 linking Canterbury and Whitstable,” he said.

“It takes its name from the old Victorian railway line which once linked the two places, an ideal family cycle ride passing Blean’s ancient church and one of the largest areas of ancient broadleaved woodland in southern Britain.

“The Oyster Bay Trail is a delightful eight mile mainly traffic-free route on Regional Cycle Route 15 linking Whitstable to Reculver Country Park. Perfect family sea-side cycling.

“The Great Stour Way is an easy going traffic-free route on National Cycle Route 18 linking Canterbury to Chartham. Perfect family river-side cycling.

“Plus, the Cathedral to Coast is a challenging 50 mile, on-road circular ride on Regional Cycle Routes 16 and 17 linking Canterbury to Folkestone and Dover via quiet country



lanes and old villages. Great scenery, leafy lanes, rolling hills, wide skies and woodland guaranteed; the perfect recipe for a cycling adventure and a great day out.”

He also has some elementary but highly sensible safe cycling tips, such as look where you are going, wear warm bright clothing, dismount and walk where you need to, make sure you drink plenty of water, be sensible about your capabilities,

and carry your mobile phone.

The city itself has plenty of provision for cycling too – driven, in part, by the student population taking to two wheels. And that means plenty of safe cycling routes which can often get you from A to B quicker than if you were behind the wheel of a car.

For details of the various routes which form part of the National Cycle Route, visit the Sustrans website at www.sustrans.org.uk.

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Discover regal ruins by roundabout

CANTERBURY CASTLE

By Chris Murphy

FOR the thousands of people who drive along the Canterbury ring road each and every day, it is easy to overlook some of the city's most remarkable historic sites – too often over awed by the majesty of the cathedral or the imposing nature of the city walls themselves.

Yet a mere stone's throw from one of the city's busiest – and some may say notorious – roundabouts, is one of the city's gems.

Canterbury Castle is tucked just within the walls close to the Wincheap roundabout and if you haven't taken a stroll around it yet, there really is no time like the present.

Originally built in the 11th century, the remains of what can be seen today are the relics of its 13th-century incarnation.

One glance, and there is a notable resemblance to another of the county's finest castle – that at Rochester. And for good reason.

Because Canterbury Castle is one of the three original Royal castles in Kent – the other one looking somewhat different in Dover.

It went up not too long after the Battle of Hastings, in 1066, along the famous Roman road from Dover to London.

William the Conqueror took that journey the same year he arrived and he soon realised their strategic importance.

They are typical examples of a motte-and-bailey castle. Some suggest the mound in nearby Dane John Gardens could be the motte for the original castle – although this remains something experts are divided upon, with many believing the mound to be an Roman burial site.

Canterbury Castle was originally wooden, and the great stone keep arrived during the reign of Henry I, built from flint and sandstone rubble.

And it was big, with dimensions estimated at almost 100 feet by 85 feet, and some believe was an incredible 80 feet high at a minimum.

In the 13th century it was turned in to a jail and an invading French force took it over in the First Barons' War. A new gate was built in 1380, but things took a turn away from the glamour of royalty and military importance in the 19th century when it was used by a gas company as a store.

The current owner, Canterbury City Council, has turned it in a major free tourist attraction that still survives in the shadow of the cathedral's lure.

A spokesman for the council said:



"It is amongst the most ancient in Britain, but by the 17th century it was already ruined.

"Today the roofless shell is surrounded by a quiet garden - inside you can climb part way up one of the towers. The castle grounds and ground floor of the keep are accessible, but there is a narrow gateway through the stone walls into the keep itself. At the entrance on Gas Street there is a tactile 3D model of

the castle as it would have been in 1200 AD.

"The Canterbury Norman castle enclosure re-used the Roman town wall as its southern boundary. Some reused Roman material may still be seen in the far corner close to the Wincheap pedestrian subway."

The council says there is only limited disabled access, but the castle is open from morning until dusk and doesn't cost a penny to visit.



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Make 2017 your year of enrichment

CLUBS AND HOBBIES

By Chris Murphy

WITH Christmas upon us and the new year just around the corner, now is traditionally the time we examine our lives and what new things we should bring to them.

What do we want to achieve in 2017? What new skills and past-times do we want to enjoy?

The resolutions we vow to make can last for as long as a few hours or, hopefully at least, a little longer.

So it is really important to make it one that you will want to keep for years to come, and that can include starting a new hobby or joining a local club.

And there are plenty to choose from in the Canterbury area.

The old classic, at this time of year, of course, is to focus on our well-being and physical fitness. And there are plenty of gyms for those wanting to pump some iron or hit a treadmill.

For those wanting a rather more enriching experience, then what about joining a walking group? There's the Canterbury

Country Paths group or Canterbury Ramblers – both keen to welcome new members keen to explore the countryside around them.

Merging a hobby and plans for a nice holiday can come together by learning a new language. At £9 an hour, there is a great set of courses at the University of Kent.

The university said: "Our centre for English and world languages is offering 10-week courses in French, Japanese, Mandarin and Spanish.

"Language Express courses here are open to anyone who wants to learn a new language, and there is no need to be a registered student. Evening classes begin in January and all of them are at beginner level to last for 10 weeks."

Bridge clubs are active in Bekesbourne and fittingly, Bridge.

A perfect place to start your hunt for enrichment is the range of courses offered by adult education.

Based at Canterbury Academy, there's a whole host of arts and crafts courses available, ranging from beginners courses to specialist lessons for the more advanced. There are digital photography evening courses and

even some free sessions for those wanting a beginner's guide to the world of computers – so essential today. You can even get a short course on getting the most out of your iPad or tablet.

You could even brush up on your education and professional skills, with courses including GCSEs or a host of languages.

Find out the full range and details of the courses at www.kentadulteducation.co.uk.

But if you're looking for something really different, how about joining the British Cactus and Succulent Society in nearby Herne Bay?

The members meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm at the Over 60s Club, in Pettman House, Hanover Square, and discuss the delights and challenges of the prickly plants.

The Canterbury branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club is in Faversham, plus there is a Model Engineering Society in Fordwich, and camcorder club in Chilham.

Bell ringers, ceramic and chess are available at most levels, and there is even a knitting machine club in Old Wives Lees.

Learn Scottish dancing in Preston, or enjoy some wine tasting in Chestfield.



The city area really is awash with a massive variety of clubs, including those for embroidery, lace making, spinning, and

needlecraft. And if you fancy it, there are a few for keen anglers, kite flyers and even for Scrabble.



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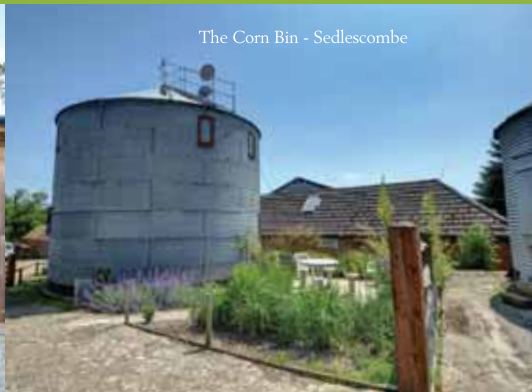


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FORE! It's not as pricey as you may think - plus there are plenty of stores and clubs around the city where you can get a taste of what Mark Twain once described as "a good walk spoiled".



Time to tee up for golf experience?

GOLF

By Chris Britcher

CHANCES are that if you know someone who enjoys a spot of golf, then they will be getting a little something to help their handicap over the festive season.

But if the game has always left you cold, is now perhaps the time to think again?

Admittedly, Mark Twain once famously said: "Golf is a good walk

spoiled," but don't let that put you off.

Because if you think playing golf is only possible courtesy of a sizeable chunk of disposable income, then the good news is you can think again. And Canterbury is ideally placed for you to give the game a go.

In fact it may never have been quite so affordable.

Not only can you get a set of clubs for comfortably under £100 – head to the likes of American Golf in Wincheap for starters – but the chances are that already lurking in your

wardrobe is the sort of loose fitting clothes that will allow you to swing and putt to your heart's content.

So all you'll then need are some balls – to hit – and away you go.

Of course, for the complete beginner, golf looks gloriously simple. Hit ball with club and watch it fly.

So, head along to your nearest club or driving range. The good news is that there are plenty of driving ranges where you can just turn up, pay for a basket of balls for a few pounds and then merrily thwack them up the range to see if you enjoy

the sensation.

Head, for example, to Canterbury Golf Club in Littlebourne Road to try its public driving range, and you'll be paying £7.50 for 100 balls.

If you do find yourself hooked, then you'll want some lessons. And no self respecting club comes without a PGA professional to tell you how to hold the club right and iron out the fact the ball keeps veering sharp left or right.

In truth lessons can get pricey. Or you could head to somewhere like Boughton Golf Club in Boughton-

under-Blean and for £75 for the day, learn all the basics as part of a group, allowing you to then spend your time fine-tuning your skills.

Granted, if you want to then join up with a club such as Broome Park, for example, you will be paying around £1,000 a year for full access. But there are always deals or simply pay per round.

In short, golf can be a nice walk to keep you healthy and an awful lot of fun. Plus your family and friends will always have something to buy you each Christmas and birthday.





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home-made food, so you can treat yourself to a snack, a meal or maybe a piece of home-made cake, all created on the premises!

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Just above the Tea Room is **Aladdin's Loft** indoor market, the name speaks for itself! Definitely worth a browse as it has 22 different retailers selling antiques and collectables, perfect is you're looking for something unusual or "not on the high street". In addition to all this, there are 5 outlets selling antiques & used furniture, with traditional, nautical and retro themes; the infamous **Quayside Clocks**, a friendly local business offering sales & repairs of rare time-pieces; **Old English Tools**, which attracts visitors who come to see and buy the classic & rare wood & metal work tools from yesteryear!

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How you can help defend this country's free press future

Kent on Sunday opinion

editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

TODAY we need your help in stopping a change in the law that would prevent Kent on Sunday from being able to properly hold to account individuals and the powers that be.

For years, KoS and other newspapers have fulfilled a crucial role by challenging injustice, safe in the knowledge that if we are right then no amount of money, influence or power can stop us telling the truth.

But that freedom to report the truth is being put at risk with an ill-considered and iniquitous proposal that opens the door to anyone trying to sue their local paper with no financial risk to themselves. Even if Kent on Sunday is completely right and we win in court we would have to pay both sides' legal costs.

We find ourselves in this position because, in common with virtually every newspaper in the country, KoS refuses to sign up to an organisation called Impress – an officially approved press regulator that allows the state to interfere in how newspapers work.

We already have an effective regu-

“For years, Kent on Sunday and other newspapers have fulfilled a crucial role challenging injustice, safe in the knowledge that if we are right then no amount of money, influence or power can stop us telling the truth

lator that was introduced in the wake of the Leveson Inquiry. Called the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), it imposes stringent and binding contractual obligations on KoS in how we deal with complaints and carry out our journalism. It even has the power to issue huge fines for breaches of the rules. Crucially, it is free from state control.

As a responsible local newspaper, KoS was pleased to sign up to the high standards demanded by IPSO. We are proud of the ethical way in which we carry out our journalism and the professional and accurate way in which our reporters do their jobs.

But we are not perfect and, on those occasions when we make mistakes, we make proper amends and apologise in full.

But because we won't sign up to Impress the government can bring into force a provision, called section 40, buried deep within the 2013 Crime



and Courts Act.

It's that section 40 which says that even though we have won our case and the court has upheld our journalism, we will have to pay both sides' legal bills in libel trials and certain other court actions like privacy, harassment or breach of confidence.

The consequences of that are eye wateringly expensive and unjust.

If newspapers aren't bankrupted they will, at the very least, have a paralysing fear of publishing anything which gives unscrupulous people the

chance of being able to line their pockets at the paper's expense.

We fervently believe section 40 should be repealed.

And now the government has decided to open the issue to the public to gauge your thoughts.

There is a public consultation on the issue which runs until January 10 and we would implore you to contribute to it. We sincerely hope you can see how disastrous this law change would be and the impact it would have on Kent on Sunday and our free press.

■ If you care about the future of an independent local media we urge you to have your say online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-leveson-inquiry-and-its-implementation-or-you-can-email-your-thoughts-to-presspolicy@culture.gov.uk>. You can also write to the consultation at Press Policy, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 4th floor, 100 Parliament

St, London, SW1A 2BQ. You can also show your support for KoS in trying to stop the introduction of this unjust legislation by writing to your local MP and explaining why your local newspaper matters to you. It will only take a few minutes and your views could play a crucial part in defending newspapers from those who would bring down the curtain on centuries of a free press.

X marks the spot as Matt wins ITV talent show race



Millions tuned in to watch and vote for Bromley's Matt Terry as he was crowned winner of the X Factor. We caught up with him this week...

By Luke May

luke.may@archant.co.uk

BROMLEY waiter Matt Terry swept to victory in the X Factor last weekend – and then spent the week sharing a bed with his pet dog. The 23-year-old was crowned the 2016 winner of the hugely popular ITV talent show during Sunday night's show – broadcast live before a packed audience at London's Wembley Arena.

He is now the favourite to secure

the coveted Christmas number one slot with his winner's single.

According to figures released by ITV (see box) he came from behind to secure the win over his rival, the Finnish singer Saara Aalto.

But after admitting he was blown away with the success, he admitted life this week had been a million miles from the jet-set lifestyle he is going to have to get used to.

"Since winning, I spent the week with my family. My little brother is moving back home so I'm going to be sleeping with my dog."

REALITY: Now the 23-year-old is preparing to release his debut album in 2017

Speaking to KoS this week, the singer said of his debut release: "I hope it makes it to number one. It's for a such a good cause too, every sale raises money for Shooting Stars, a

charity which supports kids and young people with illnesses and disabilities."

The last winner of Simon Cowell's competition to top the charts was also

from Bromley. West Wickham's Ben Haenow earned the number one spot in 2014 with Something I Need, but his next single, Second Hand Heart failed to break into the UK top 20.


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HOW THE VOTING PLAYED OUT

MATT Terry clinched the final with just eight per cent more votes than runner-up Saara Aalto.

The waiter scored 48.5 per cent in Sunday night's final, while Finnish singer Aalto was just a little behind with 40.4 per cent, according to figures released by ITV.

But on Saturday, on the vote freeze, Aalto was in the lead with 35.3 per cent, compared with 33.4 per cent for Terry, and 31.3 per cent for 5 After Midnight.

Mr Terry was ahead during the opening weeks of the live shows

which dominate weekend viewing schedules on ITV.

But the 23-year-old from Bromley started to slip in the middle, and in week eight Aalto was on top with 23.7 per cent, followed by Emily Middlemas (22.6 per cent) and Terry (21.2 per cent).

Meanwhile, rapper Honey G, who now has a record deal with Simon Cowell's label Syco, was never going to win – peaking with just 12.2 per cent of votes in week eight.

A remarkable 6.4 million votes were cast during the final.

Looking to the future, Mr Terry, whose parents live in Maidstone, explained he still had a lot to do, as he prepares to release his debut album, and sustain a longer career than most of his predecessors.

"I think your success depends on the kind of person you are, as long as you keep working hard at something then you will achieve it, you've just got to keep going.

"The hard work begins next year when we start recording my first album."

Ed Sheeran has penned this year's winner's single, When Christmas Comes Around, which has received extensive airplay this week.

Bookmaker William Hill said Mr Terry is now favourite to clinch the coveted Christmas number one single with the track – ahead of big hitters like Zayn Malik and Taylor Swift and the charity single recorded in memory of murdered MP Jo Cox.

Mr Terry added: "It's so overwhelming, I can't believe this is happening to me. It's something I've waited for, for such a long time, it's so amazing."

Sunday's live final of the ITV show saw both singers perform twice, with Mr Terry picking Sam Smith's James Bond theme tune, Writing's On The Wall, as his favourite song of the show.

His second song was a rendition of Randy Crawford's 1980 hit One Day I'll Fly Away.

His win was the second for Ms Scherzinger, who also mentored James Arthur, the winner of the 2012 series.

Other highlights from the final weekend included Mr Terry teaming up with the former Pussycat Dolls singer for a rendition of the Prince hit Purple Rain on Saturday night.

Simon Cowell vowed to give the winner "100 per cent" in a bid to ensure he had a lengthy career.



WINNER: Bromley's Matt Terry took the crown



JUDGE: Nicole Scherzinger was winner's mentor

X FACTOR'S DECLINING AUDIENCE CONTINUES

LAST weekend's X Factor attracted the show's lowest viewing figures yet for a series final.

Seven million viewers (a 20 per cent share) watched as Matt Terry was crowned winner of this year's ITV show.

It was a drop of 1.4 million from 2015, when 8.4 million watched, despite a major overhaul by Simon Cowell.

This year's final peaked at 8.3 million viewers, compared with 9.9 million last year.

The ratings low comes after ITV signed a three-year deal for The X Factor, meaning the talent show will remain on screen until at least 2019.

The 2014 final – won by Louisa Johnson – had an average audience of 9.1 million viewers and peaked at around 10.5 million viewers.

Meanwhile, Strictly Come Dancing continued to beat the opposition.

The results show on BBC1 – in which Claudia Fragapane made her exit – was seen by a peak of 12.1 million viewers with an average of 11 million (43.7 share), making it the most watched show on TV.

The first instalment of The X Factor, in 2004, had 8.1 million viewers for its results show but the series went on to enjoy viewing figures of 17.2 million in 2010 when

Matt Cardle was declared winner.

Steve Brookstein, the first winner, who has been embroiled in a public feud with Cowell, revelled in the bad news for the show, writing on Twitter: "X Factor ratings are at an all time low. £mondaymotivation".

The X Factor Final, which featured a performance from Kylie Minogue, was the most watched programme of the night for 16 to 34-year-olds, with a 37 per cent share of the age group.

The final also included performances from 2011 X Factor champions Little Mix, and Madness, who are back with a new album.

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A Christmas Carol that has endured the generations

Just why is Charles Dickens' tale such an essential part of our festive season?

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

THERE can be few people who have experienced the build-up to Christmas without some reference to a work of literature which has soaked so deeply into popular culture it's now part of the festive season's traditions.

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens is a classic of remarkable proportions; from our use of phrases derived from it (the character 'Scrooge' has become a by-word for being miserly, 'bah humbug' a familiar refrain for those not getting in the spirit of the season) to the sentiment of the story of redemption.

There have been TV, theatre and film productions on an almost annual basis and its take on Victorian Christmas – from which so much of our festive traditions derive – remains potent.

Ironically, too, that as Dickens used the novella to highlight poverty and injustice, it perhaps remains as relevant

today as when it was first published back in 1843.

Then bearing the grand title of A Christmas Carol in Prose, Being a Ghost-Story of Christmas, it has never been out of print since.

And given the author's long history in the county – he spent much of his childhood in Chatham, spent holidays in Broadstairs and spent his final years living, working and ultimately dying, at his home at Gad's Hill Place in Higham.

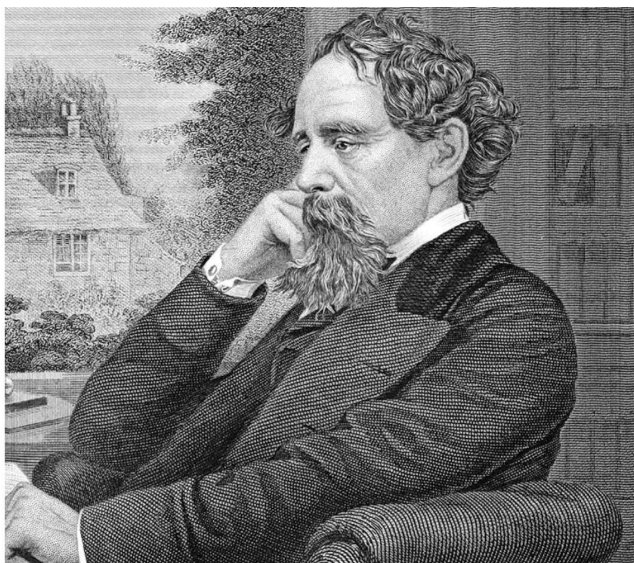
Steve Martin, from Gravesend, is the honorary general secretary of the Dickens' Fellowship.

He explained: "Dickens actually wrote many Christmas ghost stories, both before and, on the success of his most famous A Christmas Carol, almost one for every Christmas for the rest of his life.

"Some of the stories were written specifically for Christmas editions of the magazines he was editor of or involved with.

"Dickens had an idea he had a winner of a Christmas ghost story with The Carol and published it as a book.

"First runs published made almost



AUTHOR: The great Charles Dickens spent much of his life in the county

no profit due to Dickens' exacting demands and insistence on the quality of the materials and colours used to produce the book.

"Arguably, if you include money made from later editions and his readings of The Carol, it was his big-


gest money earner."

And it was those closest to him who were first to hear the tale – straight from the author's mouth, as Mr Martin explains: "For many years he gave private readings to his friends and family of his latest works to get their


reactions. This developed into amateur charity and fund raising public readings, including The Chatham Mechanics Institute, from Christmas 1853 and his first professional readings in the spring of 1858.

"Dickens performed A Christmas Carol during his first public reading; it was a mainstay throughout his reading career and even performed during his farewell reading tour in






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the spring of 1870. It was in fact his second most performed reading.

"Dickens had a shrewd business brain and with lots of outgoing expenses, he quickly realised he could earn more money from public readings than writing books."

The story of A Christmas Carol itself may be set in the capital, but it harks back to his own harsh life in Kent.

Mr Martin said: "Whilst The Carol is set in and around London many think that Scrooge's childhood experiences are based on Dickens' formative years spent in Chatham.

"It could be argued that when Scrooge was left at school over holidays while all the other pupils went home was based on his childhood experience.

"With mounting debts, his father



VERSIONS: From the memorable Muppets Christmas Carol, left, to Alastair Sim's Scrooge, above

John was posted from Chatham Dockyard Navy Pay Office to London. Whilst the rest of his family moved to London, young Charles was left at school to finish the term before joining them."

A certain house near Gravesend was of major interest.

Mr Martin went on: "Dickens first saw Gad's Hill Place at Higham, that he later came to own, in 1817 at the age of five. He would often walk there with his father John from Chatham and admire the house. His father set him a lifelong challenge by telling him 'If you were to be very persevering and were to work hard, you might someday come to live in it'.

"It is thought that Dickens describes the house in Christmas Carol

as 'a mansion of dull red brick, with a little weathercock surmounted cupola on the roof, and a bell hanging in it'. Hall Place in Bexley also makes this claim but, as I am a tour guide at Gad's Hill Place, I am sticking with the claim.

"The story A Christmas Carol is said by some scholars to be based on his earlier ghost story in The Pickwick Papers in 1836 called The Goblins Who Stole a Sexton.

"There are many similarities between the two Christmas ghost stories. There is also a school of thought that the cavern into which the sextant was dragged into by the goblins is the one below St Mary's Church in Dock Road, Chatham. The Dickens family, including a young Charles, attended church there on Sundays and you could see his childhood home from the window. His sister is thought to be buried there and he also took names from the gravestones for use later as characters in his books.

"I like many versions of The Carol including the 2009 version starring Jim Carrey and The Muppet Christmas Carol, but my all-time favourite is the 1953 black and white version titled Scrooge starring Alastair Sim.

"Even a military veteran like myself can be moved by the scene where Scrooge wakes up and finds he has not missed Christmas and has time to change."

So, why is it still so popular today and relevant?

The Dickens expert said: "It is said that Dickens reinvented or reminded us all what the spirit of Christmas is all about. He did it in a non-religious way and its themes can be found in many cultures and religions so it has worldwide appeal.

"Many versions and adaptations of the story have been and are still being written based on The Carol. I was recently asked to look at a new version of the original manuscript, located in the Morgan Library and Museum in New York and give my opinion. The left hand page is the original manuscript and the right hand page the translation. Believe me you need the translation as Dickens' handwriting is not at all easy to read and there are an unbelievable number of changes and corrections. Of particular interest to me was the description of Gad's Hill Place, yes there were changes but they were crossed out in such a way that they are illegible to me."

Professor Malcolm Andrews, editor of The Dickensian and emeritus professor of Victorian and visual studies at the University of Kent is currently reviewing the book for The Dickensian."

He concluded: "The lessons The Carol reminded people of when it first came out are still meaningful today. The Carol reminds us that long term profit and monetary growth are not the be all and end all and to enjoy the journey.

"I for one am more inclined to dig a little deeper into my pockets for charity at this giving time of year. It teaches that rewards do not have to be monetary, there is always time to change and it is never too soon to start.

"You only have to look at Brexit and the US elections to see the need for change, forgiveness and reconciliation with offended groups and mankind is everyone's responsibility. It is such a shame that the spirit Dickens reminded us of is not pursued all the year around."

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THRILLING: Peter James, Laura Whitmore and Shane Richie have come together recently to promote the new stage show

Not Dead Enough world premiere takes to the stage

The show is adapted from the third novel in Peter James' Roy Grace series...

FOLLOWING his 11th consecutive Sunday Times No.1 in the UK Book Charts and the huge sell-out success of *The Perfect Murder* and *Dead Simple* on stage, the work of author Peter James returns to three Kent venues next year - Dartford's Orchard Theatre, Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre, and Bromley's Churchill Theatre.

Not only is the show coming to those theatres, but Dartford's Orchard Theatre will stage *Not Dead Enough*'s world premiere.

Not Dead Enough was the third novel in the award winning Roy Grace series and now becomes the third play in his box office smash hit and critically acclaimed stage franchise.

Mr James has been acclaimed as 'one of the most fiendishly clever crime fiction plotters' (Daily Mail)

and his Roy Grace novels have been published in 36 languages and sold over 17 million copies worldwide.

The crime author's latest novel, *Love You Dead*, is currently enjoying a third week at No.1 in the Fiction hardback charts after only 3 weeks on sale, a new record for Mr James who is also the 2016 recipient of crime writing's highest honour, the Diamond Dagger.

Following the success of *The Perfect Murder* with Shane Richie and Jessie Wallace earlier this year, *Not Dead Enough* will reunite Mr James with theatre producer Joshua Andrews, the Olivier award winning director Ian Talbot and award winning writer Shaun McKenna.

The author says: "I am thrilled to be working with Josh Andrews again - he has turned my books in

to smash hits on stage and it's been a joy for me to see that happen.

"*Not Dead Enough* is one of my favourite Roy Grace novels, and it has been a hugely exciting journey to see just how brilliantly Shaun McKenna has once again adapted the twists and turns for the stage. Shaun and Ian Talbot did such a great job with *The Perfect Murder* and *Dead Simple* and I am looking forward to them sprinkling their magic dust on another of my stories."

On the night Brian Bishop murdered his wife, he was sixty miles away, asleep in bed. At least that's what he claims. But as detective superintendent Roy Grace continues to deal with the mysterious disappearance of his own wife, he starts to dig a little deeper into the chilling murder case and it soon becomes clear that

love can be a dangerous thing.

EastEnder's Shane Richie (Alfie Moon), Hollyoaks and Coronation Street star Stephen Billington, and former *I'm A Celebrity* TV presenter Laura Whitmore (who took part in the current series of *Strictly Come Dancing*) join forces to bring the show to life. Mr Richie will take on the role of DS Roy Grace, while Ms Whitmore and Mr Billington's characters are yet to be confirmed.

The show is coming to the Orchard Theatre from January 25-28, 2017, the Marlowe Theatre from April 10-15, 2017, and the Churchill Theatre from May 30 - June 3, 2017.

For tickets visit respective theatres via websites, orchardtheatre.co.uk, marlowetheatre.com, and churchilltheatre.co.uk, or call box offices.

» Email us details of
your event to:
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Pasquale and co give modern twist to classic Snow White

By Michael Adkins

editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

SQUEAKY-VOICED genius Joe Pasquale is back with his unique brand of comedy in this year's Orchard Theatre pantomime in Dartford.

His slapstick humour, risqué jokes and expertise in gauging the audience provides the perfect blend as Muddles in Snow White.

But don't be fooled into thinking his unlucky in love "cheeky-chappy" character is a one-man celebrity band.

Qdos production has once again put together an exceptional cast to create a magical production of a classical fairytale with an ultra modern twist. Each character complements the other, with Joe leading the way in gyrating, slapping and joking his way through the performance in hilarious style.

While Joe maybe a national treasure, Ceri Dupree as Dame Dolly Diamond wowed the audience with stunning costumes and a performance Lily Savage would be proud of. His hilarious interpretation of a legendary Tina Turner classic offers a glimpse of his huge talent.



HILARIOUS: Joe Pasquale took the lead but definitely wasn't a one-man celebrity band

The professional choreography, West End quality set designs and fresh song choices gave it a modern feel without losing the magic of the classic.

The Orchard production managed to lift what could risk becoming a cliché pantomime into something quite unique. Clever use of a hit song from the recently released Trolls movie was instantly recognisable to everyone in the opening minutes,

signalling the start of a party atmosphere from start to finish.

A cleverly incorporated 3D spooky spectacular (3D glasses were handed out by theatre staff) is something that I've never seen before in panto land – children easily spooked may want to close their eyes for a brief moment. The re-telling of the 12 days of Christmas left the audience in impromptu fits of laughter.

Rachel Stanley as the devilishly evil Queen Sadista, the seven dwarfs and, of course, vocally-stunning Snow White (Victoria Serra) and Prince Calum of Kent (Alexis Gerrard) gave powerful and faultless performances.

It's cliché to say this pantomime is not to be missed but it couldn't be truer in this case.

To book, visit orchardtheatre.co.uk

Murder mystery with twist

MURDER in Moritz is the hilarious murder mystery making its way to Broadstairs' Sarah Thorne Theatre on January 7, 2017.

Book by calling the box office on 01843 863701.



Shellfish cookbook signing

ROSEMARY Williams is the granddaughter of Stanley Holbrook, a renowned shellfish merchant in Kent.

Join her for talks about her book Prep That Fish and her journey to become an author.

To book, visit the library or email gravesendlibrary@kent.gov.uk.

Sell-out comedy success

JOSIE Long: Something Better is heading to Margate's Theatre Royal on March 2, 2017 following her previous sell-out success.

For tickets, visit theatreroyal-margate.com.



Ashford Fringe Festival '17

THE FESTIVAL is looking for community groups and individuals to present their talents to the audience at this year's celebration.

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The Patriot Girls return

THE Patriot Girls will return to the Leeds Castle Classical Concert on July 8, 2017, as part of a Battle of Britain themed musical celebration. Please visit leedscastleconcert.co.uk to book tickets.



Turkey Mill Singers charity

A GROUP of 30 stroke survivors and carers from the Stroke Association's Turkey Mill Singers in Maidstone are adding their voice to the charity's latest campaign: Lost for Words. The campaign is to raise awareness for stroke survivors with communication difficulties, and to offer them help and support.

Gravesend's live nativity

A TRADITIONAL Christmas worked its way to Gravesend last Saturday with a live nativity. The story came to life as families dressed up in their nativity outfit (shepherds, stars, Mary and Joseph).



Pantomime Day 2016

OH Yes It Did! Panto Day 2016 took place on Friday with theatres up and down the county hosting an array of celebrations. The Orchard Theatre participated in the positive promotion with behind the scenes tours, competitions, Q&As and lots of activity on social media.

Star joins Ed Sheeran's co-writer on UK tour

By Emily King
emily.king@archant.co.uk

ACCLAIMED young singer songwriter from Kent, Luke Jackson, is to join forces for the third time with Amy Wadge for a double header UK tour in the new year. And the tour is coming to Mr Jackson's hometown – Canterbury.

Between January 9-31, Luke will tour with Ms Wadge who is known for her winning songwriting collaboration with Ed Sheeran.

She and Mr Sheeran, reached number one in the official UK chart with Thinking out Loud which went platinum, and won the coveted Song of the Year at the 2016 Grammys.

Now the songwriting pair have written When Christmas Comes Around – the X Factor winner's debut single – which is making a bid to be the Christmas number one for newly crowned Matt Terry.

Mr Jackson, 22, has recently played dates in Scotland, Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands and in 2015 he supported rock band, Marillion, on a UK and



European tour.

In November he released his fourth album, Tall Tales & Rumours which gained a five star review from Maverick magazine whose reviewer said: "Tall Tales & Rumours is a brilliant, thoughtful album – Jackson shows talent beyond his years."

The Canterbury musician's 2012 debut album More Than Boys triggered a double nomination at the 2013 BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards (Young Folk Award and Horizon Award for Best Emerging

Act) and just 18 months later he produced his second album Fumes and Faith.

Joining forces with Amy Wadge presents an exciting start to 2017 – a 15 date tour which will visit Canterbury.

They will perform separate sets as well as joining forces for certain numbers.

The tour is coming to Canterbury's Gulbenkian Theatre on January 25, 2017.

For tickets, visit thegulbenkian.co.uk



FOLK: Mr Jackson is recognised for his acoustic sets



LUKE JACKSON
TALL TALES AND RUMOURS

YOUNG: The Canterbury-based singer is only 22

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'Diabetes soon becomes normal,' says De Beer

Vickie De Beer talks about her young son's diabetes and how it brought about her new cook book...

VICKIE De Beer knew something was wrong when her normally energetic eight-year-old son Lucca began to struggle to wake in the mornings, and came back from an annual camping trip with his dad Joe and two brothers looking unusually exhausted.

Although her husband and three sons often returned pleasantly tired from a few days in the wilderness, this was different. Lucca was wiped out, his breath was "sickly sweet" and he'd been asking for far more cold drinks than usual.

At first, De Beer – a food writer, chef and stylist who lives in South Africa – thought Lucca might have a throat infection.

But an appointment with their doctor the next day, and a round of blood tests, revealed her son actually had Type 1 diabetes – the form of diabetes which occurs when cells responsible for producing insulin in the body are destroyed. Unlike Type 2, it is not linked with lifestyle or weight, and tends to first appear during childhood or younger years – and the diagnosis meant Lucca would have to manage the condition for life with insulin injections.

"I was so petrified when they released Lucca from hospital and wished they would keep him there a little bit longer," De Beer recalls. "I was so worried we would make a potentially life-threatening mistake when injecting him with insulin."



WORRIED: Vickie De Beer

Family mealtimes also needed to be adjusted.

"From the moment Lucca was diagnosed, we decided that we would deal with his diabetes as a family unit," explains De Beer. "This was not only Lucca's problem. We changed the way the whole family ate."

On the advice of medics, the family stuck to a wholegrain, low GI (glycemic index) diet, keeping a close check on carbohydrate counts, to ensure Lucca's blood sugars were stable, and managed his insulin dosage.

But De Beer still had concerns about their meals.

"I always felt we weren't managing his blood sugars to the best of our ability. Although his three-monthly blood sugar blood tests were always

stable, we couldn't bring the extreme fluctuations under control."

Drawing on her food background, De Beer set about creating a low-carb plan in an attempt to help.

"Not only were his blood sugars more stable, without the extreme fluctuations, but he also had more energy and far less anxiety," explains the writer.

Now, De Beer has teamed up with dietitian Kath Megaw, refining the recipes in a new cookbook.

The Diabetes Cookbook: Low Carb Recipes For The Whole Family is packed with practical advice for people living with the condition, as well as plenty of personal anecdotes and family-friendly recipes for those who want to help their loved-one through.

True teenage drama

IF you fancy something a little different in the new year, a show called Thrive is coming to Gravesend's The Woodville on February 21.

It's a drama that sees three friends brought together by one traumatic experience. This show has been developed in collaboration with psychologists and is inspired by true stories of young people.

For tickets, visit woodville.seatlive.com

Rob Brydon on tour

PERHAPS best known for the television shows Gavin and Stacey, Would I Lie To You? and The Trip, Rob Brydon, is bringing his stand-up comedy tour to Tunbridge Wells' Assembly Hall on March 2, 2017.

Earlier this year he starred opposite Sir Kenneth Branagh in The Painkiller.

This is his first stand up show since his sell-out tour in 2009.

For tickets, visit assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk

The Vanishing Man

THIS is a show about magic. But not a magic show.

The Vanishing Man, presented by House, is coming to Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre on January 20, 2017.

Hugo Cedar was an Edwardian magician known as The Vanishing Man; he created the perfect trick and then disappeared forever, but his story lives on.

For tickets, visit marlowetheatre.com

Lee Nelson goes live

AFTER getting into trouble for sneaking into places he shouldn't be, Lee Nelson is back where he most definitely should be: live on stage with his 'brand-new, laugh-out-loud, best ever stand-up show,' which he's bringing to Maidstone's Hazlitt Theatre on February 8, 2017.

For tickets to his Lee Nelson: Work in Progress tour, visit parkwoodtheatres.co.uk or call 01622 758611.

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Destination sunshine

Going a long way north, to travel a lot further south, might sound an unusual start to a holiday – but it proved an unforgettable gateway to a great holiday as **NIGEL PICKOVER** reports.

At the end of a trip which fulfilled all hopes and dreams our hearts sparkled like the aquamarine sea below. We were on the deck of the cruise ship Balmoral celebrating a marvellous holiday.

This time last year we booked a cruise with East Anglian-based Fred Olsen, planning and saving through the dark days of winter for summer joys ahead, the 'looking forward to' being so important.

Fred's fleet of four vessels sail from ports around the UK – and that's why we drove north to North Shields in August this year.

We had a balcony and sitting area and had opted for a bath, not shower and all was lovely, prompting us to toast our trip with a glass of fizz.

The Tyne soon became the North Sea and the ship's prow turned south, destination sunshine and exotic lands.

Balmoral's engines ploughed us through green-blue foaming seas and Biscay was benevolent as we headed for our first port of call, La Corunna, Spain.

The trip was to Spain, Portugal, including Madeira, and the Canary Islands – adventurous enough for us – but the Fred Olsen fleet goes around the world.



TRAVEL FACTS

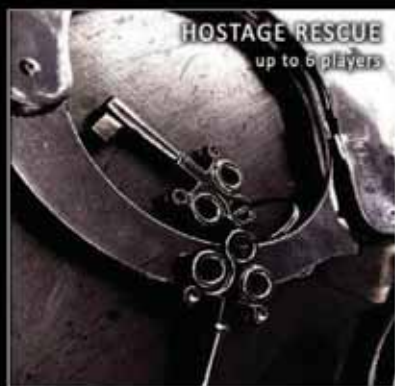
■ **Sample holiday** – Braemar has an eight-night 'Norwegian Fjords' cruise, departing from Southampton on Saturday August 5, 2017. Prices start from £1,099 per person, based on two adults sharing a twin-bedded Interior Room. www.fredolsencruises.com

■ **Children** – we travelled in school holiday time and there

were around 20 children aboard. It was lovely seeing the fun and excitement of families.

■ **Classes** – many and varied. My wife enjoyed the water colours class and even had one of her paintings exhibited!

■ **Shopping on board** – very reasonable and we bought several presents.



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Please include your name and address, although these will be withheld in exceptional circumstances, and a daytime phone number for verification (this will not be published). We reserve the right to edit all letters.

Now here's a good thought

IN last week's Kent on Sunday almost all of the letters page was taken up by diatribes from correspondents giving vent to their feelings about the result of the referendum and the opinions of a previous correspondent with whom they disagreed.

It was not a very edifying spectacle. Surely it is possible in our county Sunday newspaper for people to concern themselves a little less with their own prejudices and a little more about how the county of Kent will be affected in the days and years ahead.

Moreover, there are plenty of other important local, national and international issues that need to be addressed.

Richard Ablett,
Deal

Get Southeastern plans on track

AS a commuter to London I agree with Sevenoaks MP Michael Fallon [KoS, last week] that we all must push for rail improvements.

So what does he have to say on his fellow minister Chris Grayling's retrograde decision not to devolve our train services to Transport for London as previously promised?

Southeastern trains have delivered a diabolical service over recent weeks up to Christmas, and I can assure local rail passengers that the Lib Dems will be campaigning hard for Chris Grayling's political decision to be reversed urgently.

Dr Alan Bullion,
Lib Dem parliamentary spokesman for Sevenoaks and Swanley

R Redding is like family to me

I CONGRATULATE R Redding [KoS letters, 04.12] on his very correct version of what is happening to our country, his article expresses exactly what I have been saying and though some people have agreed with me with regard this fiasco, it is the first time that I have seen the very same opinion as myself.

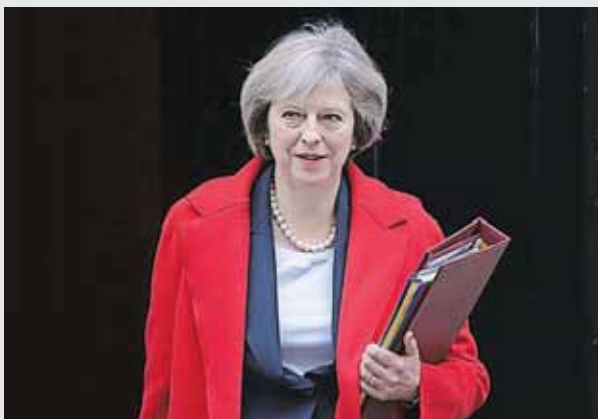
We could be siblings, though I suspect he is Labour and I Liberal, yet we sing from the same hymn sheet.

The only thing missing from his piece is the aggression that I experienced when leafleting.

Congratulations R Redding for a well thought out piece from the voters that felt that we should think of our children, the next generation.

R Wright,
Birchington

LETTER OF THE WEEK



Grammars will keep us top of the class

IT should be no surprise that a large number of head teachers are opposing grammar schools [KoS, last week], as the educational establishment has long been campaigning against the principle of selection.

Many senior teachers were influenced as youngsters by the ideological policies connected with so called progressive education, so fashionable in the sixties and seventies, many are the victims of the kind of group think we have seen in many fields, where it becomes impossible for individuals to accept that perhaps the received wisdom of the majority of their immediate contemporaries might be in error, and of course many know that it is easier to be involved in education if the aim is supposedly egalitarian, rather than the pursuit of excellence.

It is ironic that, in the name of social equality, these people undermine the system by which academically gifted working class

children were able to climb the ladder of achievement and succeed in their future careers, a ladder incidentally created by the post war Labour government. I know from personal experience that the majority of those attending grammar schools in the 1950s were from working class backgrounds and, by destroying these schools, the educationalists leave the field open for those at fee paying schools to advance into the best professions, while the children of those who cannot afford to pay must make do with second best.

Recent comparisons between the level of educational achievement in the UK and that in other countries has shown that we are falling ever farther behind in all significant subjects. One major reason is that other nations have no hesitation in selecting and encouraging those who can most benefit from a high standard of teaching, while we aim at an equality of outcome.

Colin Bullen
Tonbridge

Greens will pedal us into trouble

ELECTRICAL transport would appear to be the future.

The country is run and totally dependent on computers. Prolonged cold weather, we are told, will almost certainly cause power failures.

This is not the seventies, when to conserve coal stocks, black-outs took place. Although an inconvenience, it was adequately managed.

The green lobby, which holds considerable influence with government, insists the answer to be,

heavily subsidised, windmills.

To hell in a hand cart or what?!

S Reeves,
Herne Bay

Fight back over bank closures

IT isn't fair that about half a dozen branches of the NatWest bank in Kent are set to close [KoS, last week].

This is due to the infernal rise of online banking which many people dislike, because of the risk of fraud, amongst other things.

They feel their money is safer if they can see someone at their bank in person. Particularly if they are old, frail or vulnerable, as online thieves find them the easiest targets to defraud.

Rosie Johnston,
Ightham

Hospice thanks its supporters

WHAT an incredible year it has been for Demelza Hospice Care for Children, thanks to the support of everyone in the area.

Thank you to all our wonderful supporters who have done so much for Demelza over the past year. There are far too many to name each and every one of you but believe that what you have achieved over this past year had made a huge difference to the lives of our children and families.

Because of you, Demelza has been able to provide vital care to seriously ill babies, children, young people and their families living across Kent, south east London and East Sussex.

If you would like to find out more about our vital work and are interested in fundraising or volunteering for Demelza, then it would be lovely to hear from you.

David Holmes,
Community fundraiser, Demelza

Go easy on shop staff this week

FOR many this is always an exciting time, but we know it can be frantic trying to get everything ready.

I want to gently remind your readers to remember that shopworkers are people as well. They will be working really hard to make your shopping experience as stress-free and enjoyable as possible.

A recent Usdaw survey showed that every minute of the working day another shopworker is verbally abused, threatened with violence or physically attacked. Shopworkers tell us that incidents are more frequent throughout the Christmas and new year period when customers can be stressed and are more likely to take out their frustration.

Talking to our members who work in retail, I know that verbal abuse cuts deep. Many will go home after a shift upset about an unpleasant incident that took place at work that day and worried that it will happen to them again.

Remembering shopworkers are working extra hard at this time and treating them with respect will mean that everyone can have a happier Christmas.

John Hannett,
General secretary, Union of Shop,
Distributive and Allied Workers

KOS 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AS part of our commitment to providing the best service to you, we have produced our 10 guiding principles

Kent on Sunday will:

- 1) Be available in every postcode in Kent.
- 2) Be fair, accurate and balanced.
- 3) Be written in clear, concise English.

- 4) Not be overly sensational.
- 5) Have a sense of humour.
- 6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
- 7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
- 8) Highlight topical issues of concern to East

people living in the county.

9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.

10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.
kent-life.co.uk kentnews.co.uk



Ramsgate Marina at Christmas

by **Brian Summers**
from **Faversham**

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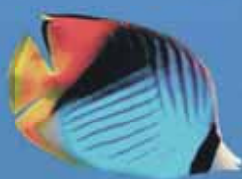
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SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel: 0906 515 3018 Box: 413399

CAROL, mid 50s lady, young at heart, attractive and sexy (so I'm told) Give me a call if you are a gent with GSOH. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424783

CORRINE, genuine advertiser seeking adult fun, no time wasters pls. I will respond to all msgs. Text Only. Mailbox: 4035196

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KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+. Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3002 Box 419673

ATTRACTIVE, genuine lady, own home, loves to spoil a man, give me a call or text. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424673

JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 3010 Box: 409715

NAUGHTY curvy 46yr old lady, outgoing and bubbly with a naughty side and lots of banter, WLTm chap 30+. If you are married even better. ACS. Tel: 0906 515 3014 Box 424543

MARY, professional mature lady, loves life, very sociable and fun, seeks gent for good conversation and happy times. All calls and texts answered. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424775

SARAH, 39yrs, married, seeking chap for no strings intimate times. Special friendship, mutual respect. Give me a call. Tel: 0906 515 3030 Box 408291

HELEN, mid 50s naughty lady seeks some fun times with gent any age. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424493

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3022 Box 421375

JACKIE, 56yrs, attractive lady who is lots of fun seeks like-minded gent for nights in, days out and much more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424491

HI Gents, I'm Kelly, a down to earth lady, 35yrs, shapely brunette, seeking someone with GSOH, looks unimportant, any age. ACA, I promise! Tel: 0906 515 3026 Box 423035

SARAH, mature feminine lady, kind caring but still has a sensual side, hoping to meet like minded, confident, non smoking gent with GSOH, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424777

TAMIKA, mature black beauty, hourglass figure and open minded, Pis call if you are discreet, broad minded and nice. I can travel and accommodate. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3006 Box 422365

SUE, outgoing lady, enjoys life, likes meals, holidays, WLTm mature gentleman to share interests and spend quality time together. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424669

JEAN, mature lady, genuine with many hobbies, slim, blonde and attractive. WLTm interesting gent with GSOH, must be cheerful, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424675

50YRS, old attractive lady. Sheila, caring honest, seeks discreet gent. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422469

CALLING all Gentlemen! I'm Janet a mature solvent stylish lady. I'm waiting for you to call me so we can wine/dine and have some good times. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424335

HI I'm Angie, attractive petite mid 50s lady. I'm a very very active lady, with lots of interests. WLTm chap with GSOH, looks/age unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424333

HI I'm Darren, down to earth guy, lives in Kent, likes Marbais, looking for someone special to meet and have a laugh with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424951

ANGELA, 48yrs, seeks male companion for nights out, dining, maybe more. ACA or text me. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424955

PRESENTABLE divorced lady, young 60, many interests, animal lover, seeks outgoing, cheerful, honest, smart looking man, for cultural times. Text only Mailbox: 5576529

WENDY, 44yrs, dark haired beauty with blue eyes and a fab figure. WLTm gent any age, give me a call and I promise to call you back, or text/email. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424339

NICK, mature male, builder, tattoos, plenty of money, looking for discreet meets, no stings in the Kent area. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424787

MARK 48, slim, fit, GSOH, looking for loyal partner for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424679

NICE looking 55 year old male WLTm sincere lady, any age, for friendship, outings, holidays abroad etc. Love the sun. Text only. Mailbox: 4922399

DENTAL practitioner, 44, fit, slim, athletic build, thick dark hair, blue eyes, loves sports, seeks slim feminine sporty lady. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425087

EDWARD, 77, looking for a companion South East area of Kent, for holidays, days out, social events, and lots more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423039

TALL, lively old boy, into red wine, garlic and Radio 3, seeks tactile lady for company and joyful jaunts. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425021

HELLO Gents, I'm a mature attractive interesting lady, with gorgeous eyes. I'm smart, sophisticated, love theatre and films. Give me a call or text me. Looks unimportant, must be kind. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424331

WIDOW, 62, short, looking for friendship at present, interested? Ha ha call to phone to find out more! Call Jan. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424195

ORIENTAL lady, honest, caring, loves walking, pub lunches, places of interest, good company and lots more, seeking a kind genuine male, a n/s, 70-80. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423359

RETIRED lady, an outgoing person, enjoys life, likes meals out, holidays, WLTm someone to share interests with, and quality time. Text only Mailbox: 5552642

LESLEY, 66, retired beauty therapist, blonde hair, blue eyes, size 14, likes going out, travelling, holidays, arts, looking for a nice guy, 57-67, would be great to get a reply. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424147

ANDREW, 50, slim to medium build, lives in Ashford/Kent area, WLTm a woman, 40-70, for discreet fun, would be great to hear from you so get back to find out more! Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423271

GARY, 53, caring, likes snooker, bowls, looking for a nice woman to meet and fall in love with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423145

HAPPY go lucky divorced man, 48, 6ft, well built, seeks gorgeous female to share love and laughs with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424677

COLIN, 56, 6ft, medium build, clean and tidy with a bit of beard, I after some TLC with no strings adult fun. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422359

ANDY, tall attractive male, looking for a naughty female, for fun with no strings attached. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424295

MALE, 52, quiet nature, likes coastal walks, cinema, reading, WLTm lady for friendship and maybe romance. East Kent area. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424211

48YR old divorced male, 6ft, well built, seeks lady for fun and laughter. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 380789

RETIRED, intelligent, Broadstairs widower, GSOH, medium height and build, seeks slim lady for friendship and companionship initially. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424697

59YR old male, likes country walks, pub lunches, seeks lady for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424685

MALE 50, seeks mature, home loving lady, 60 plus who enjoys cosy nights in. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424683

MARTIN trustworthy, warm headed, loving, reliable male, 45, 6ft, medium build, young at heart, GSOH, seeks female, 50-60 for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424681

SINGLE lady, 65, blonde, quiet nature, likes the outdoors, picnics, jiving, WLTm single gentleman for companionship and possible romance. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423411

WIDOW, 70s, brown hair and eyes, likes walking, pub lunches, places of interest, good company and lots more, seeking a kind genuine male, a n/s, 70-80. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423359

ORIENTAL lady, honest, caring, loves walking, pub lunches, places of interest, good company and lots more, seeking a kind genuine male, a n/s, 70-80. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423359

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RICHARD, 64, n/s, from Kent, medium build, clean shaven, likes classic cars, days out, meals out, boot fairs, most things, would like to meet a lady for company and to share each others interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424207

BRIAN, 6ft3, fit, bit grey but genuine and kind, looking for a naughty female, for no strings adult fun, if you're interested please get back to me. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423483

MALE, 53, 5ft6, single, hardworking, looking for slim/small lady. 40-56. Maidstone, Kent. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423363

OUTGOING male, seeking attractive female, likes sports, music, cinema and nights out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414793

ANDREW, 50, slim to medium build, lives in Ashford/Kent area, WLTm a woman, 40-70, for discreet fun, would be great to hear from you so get back to find out more! Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423271

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BARRY 47, 6ft, well built, seeks female for winning, dining and fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 361787

MALE, widower, n/s, would love to meet buxom friendly lady, up to 70, for friendship at first, interests include all types of music, walking, quizzes. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422957

HELLO my name is Paul, 43, 5ft9, from Sittingbourne in Kent, looking for someone to have some fun with and see where it goes! Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422905

TALL single early 60's male looking for pure hearted lady for LTR. Text only Mailbox: 5496781

GARY 48, 6ft, well-built, dark hair, brown eyes, seeks passionate female for fun times in and out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 387175

VINCENT 48, 6ft, well built, seeks lady for fun nights in and out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 377397

BI male 68 slim looking for similar male who can accommodate. Text only Mailbox: 5585368

WOULD Mick from Maidenhead get in touch with John from Northampton - lost your number. Text only Mailbox: 4172093

ALAN, 68, gay man seeking a man, 65-75, for fun and maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424885

SIMON, 29yrs, gay curious, seeking older gent for new experiences, must be discreet as I live at home. Text Only: Mailbox: 4196422

SEEKING ladies for good company, socialising and a bit of fun, BWB lady to Kent, get in touch and lets start having fun. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 413623

FEMALE seeking genuine straight female for daytrips, out to meet socially for lunch/coffee. Text only to Mailbox No: 4748240

WRITER, tall, slim, fit, natural dark hair, generous, seeks lady for erotic rendezvous, I will make it worth your while! Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422777

49YR old male, 6ft, well built, seeks female to wine/dine and have fun with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 390929

TONY, early 60s, 6ft, slim, fit, easy going, looking for no strings fun with a lady, age unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422643

MALE, widower, n/s, would love to meet buxom friendly lady, up to 70, for friendship at first, interests include all types of music, walking, quizzes. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422957

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By Steve Loader
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

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SUPER SKODAS: The new Kodiaq, the Flavia, the Octavia and (below) the Superb.

Kodiaq set to boost Skoda sales

FIRST DRIVE: A Czech brand's sales ever higher – and bury those old Skoda jokes...

NEXT year will be big in more ways than one for Skoda. On the back of ever increasing UK sales, the VW group's Czech arm will launch an all-new big SUV, the seven-seat Kodiaq.

Order books are open now, ahead of its arrival here next April, with prices starting at a modest £21,495.

Five engine options, two and four-wheel drive, and manual or DSG auto gearboxes are all offered, and Skoda says family buyers will love how it features more than 30 of the brand's 'Simply Clever' features – seven are new.

These include electrically-activated child locks and special sleep headrests for rear passengers.

News of the Kodiaq follows on from an equipment upgrade in November for its best seller, the Octavia; the three modern-day generations of this model celebrated their 20th anniversary this year, having buried those tired old Soviet era Skoda jokes and established a brand now regularly topping customer satisfaction polls.

The Kodiaq also becomes big brother to Skoda's other modern success story, the smaller Yeti SUV, available in formidable Outdoor format with full 4x4 and 'protected state' bodywork, or as a standard front-wheel drive car that is spacious,



practical and economical enough to battle rivals in the crossover sector.

There are popular small cars too: the brilliant Citigo three and five-door city car – on balance, the best in its class – and Fabia supermini.

The latter sells as a hatchback or surprisingly capacious estate and is far more stylish than its

predecessor.

But the last word rightly goes to the aptly named Superb, Skoda's flagship. It looks and feels much like an Audi A6 for a lot less money. It might not have such a sporty chassis, but buyers who desire comfort and class may prefer the Skoda – and cash left over for luxury weekends away.

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☎ **0843 658 9764**
🌐 www.motorline.co.uk/skoda

[#]At the end of the agreement there are three options: i) own the vehicle: pay the optional final payment; ii) return the vehicle: subject to fair wear and tear, excess mileage charges may apply; or iii) replace: part exchange the vehicle.
Available on a Solutions Personal Contract Plan. 18s and over. Subject to availability. Finance subject to status. Terms and conditions apply. Offer available when ordered by 23 January 2017 from participating retailers. Offers are not available in conjunction with any other offer and may be varied or withdrawn at any time. Accurate at time of publication. Freepost ŠKODA Financial Services. We can introduce you to a limited number of lenders to assist with your purchase, who may pay us for introducing you to them. Models shown are: ŠKODA Citigo Colour Edition 1.0 MPI Sdr 60PS at £10,620 OTR, ŠKODA Yeti Outdoor SE L 1.2 TSI 110PS at £20,990 OTR with optional paint at £195 and ŠKODA Octavia Hatch vRS 2.0 TSI 220PS manual at £24,885 OTR with optional metallic paint at £380, acoustic front and rear parking sensors at £350, front assist at £315 and black design package at £150. Models shown may vary from UK specification.
Official fuel consumption for the ŠKODA range in mpg (litres/100km): Urban 31.4 (9.0) to 72.4 (3.9); Extra Urban 45.6 (6.2) to 88.3 (3.2), Combined 39.2 (7.2) to 80.7 (3.5). CO₂ emissions for the ŠKODA range in mpg are 164 to 90 g/km. The advertised range is correct as of 10 October 2016 and is subject to change. Standard EU test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results.

The classy CX3 – Mazda's mighty atom

Japanese brand's baby SUV/crossover is a driver's delight and a technological triumph for the Mazda Skyactiv technologies programme writes **Steve Loader...**

TOYOTA caused a sensation when it launched the original RAV4 in 1994.

This pocket 4x4 was quickly dubbed the 'GTi off-roader', offering would-be 4x4 buyers on-road appeal lacking in the mud-plugging titans of the day.

Sadly, Toyota could not maintain the momentum, and didn't need to: the RAV4 has a cachet that the world's No1 carmaker wishes it could attach to its modest mainstream models, even though it has become more bloated and mediocre as the generations have passed by.

The sparky original car has a successor though: Mazda's classy CX-3 launched last year.

This new mighty atom benefits from all the technologies in Mazda's Skyactiv development programme: weight saving, power increases with lower consumption and emissions, aerodynamics with style and, above all, driving pleasure and easy ownership.

True, it looks expensive against most rivals, but you don't have to look far to see its real value.

Apart from obvious kerb appeal against, let's be honest, some clunky and chunky opposition, the CX-3 (from £17,595) has generous specifications with many features



others would charge extra for.

These include steering wheel-mounted controls and electric/heated/folding door mirrors, and there's an intuitive seven-inch touchscreen and multimedia control system as standard.

It also comes with a mainstream/premium badge that nobody can

sneer at, underpinned as it is by the excellent MX-5 sports car.

Available in front wheel drive and AWD formats, all CX-3 models shine on-road, but it is exceptional in AWD, as I learned on a memorable launch event driving swooping roads on the Northumbrian moors.

Seeking to recapture that pleasure,



I have been driving the 2.0 150PS (148bhp) petrol AWD Sport Nav, which enjoys a lot of power for a relatively light crossover/SUV.

The car's handling is light and accurate and aided by a free-revving engine, crisp gearchange and good steering feedback. Though relatively tall, it corners in a flat stance with

Mazda CX-3 2.0 150ps AWD Sport Nav

Price:	from £22,495
Driving appeal:	★★★★
Image:	★★★★
Space:	★★★
Value:	★★★★
Running costs:	★★★★
How green?:	★★★★
Best rival:	Renault Captur

lots of grip. And not only does it handle itself with aplomb, it also looks the part inside. The cabin is classy and well-appointed, especially at this level in the range, with its leather seats.

Space is surprisingly good for the car's on-road footprint, while the boot stands comparison with rivals.

The CX-3 appeals mainly to private buyers, so the peppy 120PS (119bhp) and our 150PS 2.0-litre petrol models dominate sales, but do check out the refined 105PS (104bhp) 1.5 diesel. It offers smoothness, low down response and 70.6mpg (combined) for those who notch up the miles and fuel savings necessary to recoup the extra £1,400 at purchase time.

The 120PS petrol comes only with front wheel drive and, not surprisingly, feels lighter on the handling front. It also sounds less refined than the impressive diesel.

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Fuel consumption figures for the Fullback range in mpg (l/100km): Combined from 37.7 (7.5) – 44.1 (6.4). CO₂ emissions 169g/km – 196g/km. Fuel consumption and CO₂ figures based on standard EU tests for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. * Business Contract Hire Rental based on Fullback 2.4 180 HP Double Cab LX 6 Speed Manual Euro 5+ (incl. metallic paint at £400 excl. VAT) with an initial rental of £1,791 followed by 23 monthly rentals of £199. All Rentals shown above exclude VAT and maintenance, based on 8,000 miles per annum. Excess mileage charges apply. Vehicles must be registered between 1st October and 31st December 2016. Promotion subject to status and availability. A guarantee or indemnity may be required. Terms and conditions apply. FCA Fleet Services, PO Box 4590, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 0WU. Vehicles shown for illustrative purposes only. We work with a number of creditors including Fiat Professional Contract Hire.



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La meccanica delle emozioni



Model Shown: The All-New Alfa Romeo Giulia 2.9 V6 Bi-Turbo 510 hp Quadrifoglio at £60,750 including £1750 Competizione Red. Range of official fuel consumption figures for the Alfa Giulia range: Urban 22.8 - 53.3 mpg (12.4 - 5.3 l/100km); Extra Urban 49.6 - 80.7 mpg (5.7 - 3.5 l/100km); Combined 34.4 - 67.3 mpg (8.2 - 4.2 l/100km). CO₂ emissions 189 - 109 g/km. Fuel consumption and CO₂ figures are obtained for comparative purposes in accordance with EC directives/regulations and may not be representative of real-life driving conditions.

17727

LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

Section 17 Licensing Act 2003

Licensing Act 2003: Application for a new Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **Rafferty's Cafe Ltd** has applied to the Sevenoaks District Council on **8th December 2016** for a new premises licence for **Premises known as Rafferty's Café, situated at 54, Holly Bush Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3TL**

The proposed application is to permit;

1. *the sale by retail of alcohol daily and*
2. *provision of late night refreshment (New Year's Eve only).*

Any person who wishes to make a representation in relation to this application must give notice in writing of his/her representation by **7th January 2017 (28 days the day after the application is received by the licensing department)** stating the grounds for making said representation to: Licensing Partnership, PO Box 182, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1GP (e-mail: licensing@sevenoaks.gov.uk)

The public register where applications are available to be viewed by members of the public can be accessed online by visiting at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/Licensing and following the link to the public register.

The Licensing Authority must receive representations by the date given above. Representations must relate to one or more of the licensing objectives (namely crime and disorder, public nuisance, public safety, or protection of children from harm.) It is an offence, under section 158 of the Licensing Act 2003, to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in or in connection with an application for premises licence and the maximum fine on being convicted of such an offence is £5000.

Stephen Thomas LAW, Solicitors for the Applicant,
8, Grassmere, Leybourne, Kent ME19 5QP

DOUGLAS LOTT (Deceased)

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the above named, late of 18 Hatch Road, Lenham, Maidstone, who died on 15/04/2016, are required to send written particulars thereof to the undersigned on or before 27/02/2017, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to the claims and interests of which they have had notice.

Whitehead Monckton,
Monckton House, 72 King Street,
Maidstone, Kent ME14 1BL.



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Spencer Private Hospitals are two hospitals situated in East Kent. The larger of the two hospitals is a 22 bed independent hospital situated at the QEOM Hospital in Margate, whilst the second hospital is a 4 bed independent hospital based at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford. Both hospitals have a reputation for providing excellent medical and surgical facilities supported by Specialist Consultants, Specialist Nurses and Physiotherapists. We have state of the art diagnostic equipment and exceptionally high standards of nursing care.

The continuing growth of our business has resulted in a vacancy for the following staff:

Staff Nurses X 3 – To cover our Ashford and Canterbury sites

Full time **Hours: 37.5 per week** **Closing date: Ongoing**

Salary: £23-25,000 per annum dependant on qualifications and experience

Qualifications and Experience

- Registered Nurse 1st level
- Evidence of continual professional development
- Experience in a surgical/medical environment with a knowledge and understanding of surgical/medical procedures
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills

To discuss these opportunities, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Gail Cribbens, Nurse Manager on 01233 651818

Self Employed Porter / Handyman – Margate and Ashford

Working at both sites as needed:

Salary - £8.37 per hour

Closing Date – 4 January 2017

Qualifications and Experience

- Secondary education
- Ability to work with people and put them at their ease
- Basic DIY Skills
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- Flexible to meet the needs of the company (must be able to travel to both sites)

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Gills Ladies star wins FA Cup gong

Fliss Gibbons was named player of the round after a 7-1 win

Football

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

GILLINGHAM Ladies star Fliss Gibbons this week scooped an award after inspiring her team to an emphatic victory in the FA Cup.

The 22-year-old forward bagged four goals as Gills beat Southampton Saints 7-1, which led to a panel choosing her over others from more than 50 teams as the player of the first round.

"It feels good, I had no idea I'd been nominated, or won, until [manager] Jack Wheeler rung me on Monday, but I'm so pleased with it," said Gibbons.

"I was really happy with the four goals, really pleased, it was a really good team performance.

"We do create a lot of chances generally during games, so it was nice that we were clinical as a team and me on a personal level."

The win, courtesy of Gibbons' quadruple plus a Charlotte Gurr double and a volley from Jay Blackie, sets up a glamour second round tie with Tottenham Hotspur.

And Ditton's Gibbons – who works with disabled children at a secondary school – is relishing Gills' trip to north London.

"The win fills us with confidence going into the next round. It was a solid performance," she added.

"We've got a difficult draw in the next round. We know it's going to be a difficult game, but we've got nothing to lose, so we'll be confident going into it.

"We take every game as it comes, but we obviously want to go as far as



HONOURED: Fliss Gibbons with her award

SPORTSBEAT/ROBERTO PAYNE

we can in the FA Cup, we've already said that it is a focus of ours, to get as far as we can, regardless of opposition."

Boss Wheeler added: "The cup is one of our priorities, and something that keeps the girls striving to get better and go as far as we can. For us to win it, it might be a little bit far off,

but we'll definitely give it a go."

Tickets are now on sale for the SSE Women's FA Cup Final on Saturday, May 13, at Wembley Stadium connected by EE.

For the second consecutive year, kids go free to the final, tickets can be purchased here: <https://ticketing.thefa.com/>

£400,000 deal to improve Gallagher Stadium

Football

MAIDSTONE United will soon have ground capacity in line with National League requirements after striking a £400,000 deal to construct a new north stand terrace at the Gallagher Stadium.

The work will be carried out by Sevenoaks-based infrastructure services company FM Conway, returning to the county town having delivered the £550,000 extension project for the main east stand last year.

FM Conway will deliver the piling, foundation, drainage and hard landscaping works for the new stand, which will bring the stadium's total capacity to 4,170, as well as constructing a new



HOME: Maidstone's Gallagher Stadium

turnstile entrance.

Terry Casey, co-owner of Maidstone United, said: "We are delighted

that we've been able to maintain the excellent relationship between ourselves and FM Conway.

"The work that was done by FM Conway on the east stand meant that we were very keen to retain them for the project on the north stand.

"The football club is on an exciting journey into the football league, and we hope that FM Conway is able to join us on that journey as we progress."

Matt Smith, director of structures and rail at FM Conway, added: "FM Conway's success is built on repeat business and we pride ourselves on working closely with customers to understand their needs.

"We look forward to continuing to support the club as it continues its rise up the football tables."

Sport Shorts » Email sports@kosmedia.co.uk or call Jamie Weir on 01233 653481

Bell-Drummond wins England Lions call-up

KENT opener Daniel Bell-Drummond has received another international call-up after being selected for England Lions' one-day series in Sri Lanka next year.

The batsman will fly out after the county's tour to Antigua next month, joining the Lions for the series taking place across February and March.

James Whitaker, the National Selector who watched the Lions beat Afghanistan in an historic first-class match in Abu Dhabi last week, said: "The Lions play such an important role in bridging the gap between county and international cricket, and after a successful training camp in the UAE culminating in an excellent win against Afghanistan, this tour of Sri Lanka is a great opportunity for the players to gain experience of playing on the subcontinent."

Bell-Drummond, Kent's one-day player of the year, impressed earlier this month as the Lions cruised to victory over the UAE, partnering Keaton Jennings in an opening stand of 107 inside 22 overs.



STAR: Daniel Bell-Drummond



VENUE: Alexandra Palace

Glamour tie for Payne on his Ally Pally debut

GRAVESEND'S Josh Payne is set to make his World Darts Championship debut at Alexandra Palace this weekend in a mouthwatering tie with Terry Jenkins.

Payne, nicknamed The Maximum, will hope to cause an upset when he takes on 18th seed Jenkins, nicknamed The Bull.

Jenkins has fallen foul of a Kent debutant before, suffering a shock

first-round defeat to Ramsgate-born Kirk Shepherd in the same tournament back in December 2007, in which Shepherd went all the way to the final, ultimately losing to John Part.

Payne, 23, reached the last 16 of the Players Championship Finals and last 32 of the World Matchplay earlier this year and was involved in the last 32 of the UK Open in 2015.

Hawkins bows out in Glasgow

BARRY Hawkins crashed out of the Scottish Open after defeat to China's Liang Wenbo in Glasgow.

The Ditton potter missed out on a spot in the quarter-finals after going down 4-3 in his fourth round clash on Thursday night.

Hawkins has enjoyed a positive 2016 on the table, reaching his first ever Masters final back in January, where he was ultimately beaten by

Ronnie O'Sullivan.

He got one over on his old foe weeks later at the world championships in Sheffield, before almost clinching one of the best comebacks of all time.

9-1 down at one stage, he clawed the deficit back to 10-9 and could have levelled the score but was eventually beaten 13-11 in his quarter-final with Marco Fu.

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